BECAVSE OF POWER

ELLA·STRYKER·MAPES

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Otto T. Mallory
Rock Island
Ills
June 23/04

Marita.

—Frontispiece.

Because of Power

BY

ELLA STRYKER MAPES

ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

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Because of Power

CHAPTER I

"NOW look back," said the Judge, bringing his horses to a standstill on the bridge with a hump in its back.

Hamilton turned and looked down upon a part of the Delaware Valley where Nature has drawn her outlines and swept her brush with lavish strokes.

"Superb!" he exclaimed.

"Isn't it?" said the Judge, his eyes following the shining length of river as it wound through sunlit fields, stretching away to meet the hills. "Do you see how the stream widens out below the bend where the willows grow? That's where the barefoot boys fish with birch rods, and—don't you let her know I told you—but before my girl grew up, she was often found there, too—bare feet, birch rod, and a can of bait she dug herself." The Judge chuckled over this betrayal of his daughter's youthful pranks, and then changed the

subject by asking Hamilton, "if he heard the rush of falling water?"

"It sounds quite near," replied Hamilton, listening.

"Well, right up there," said the Judge, indicating the direction with his whip, "a mountain torrent tumbles into a deep ravine, and becomes the well-behaved brook under the bridge we're on."

"I don't wonder you're devoted to this place, Judge."

"Wait a little—you haven't seen much of it yet."

They drove on up the hill, until through a break in the trees at a turn of the road, Hamilton saw the town they had left, far below them.

"I didn't realize we were up so high," he said with some surprise.

"Yes, it's a steady ascent the whole two miles," replied the Judge. "Look ahead of you, there—I want to know what you think of *that*."

"*That*" was a colonial house, surrounded by stately trees and commanding a view of the whole valley. It was one of those time-stained dwellings imbued with the charm only bestowed by the passing of many lives. A wistaria of wondrous growth covered its weather-beaten front, overhanging the wide veranda and whispering long hidden secrets to the old-fashioned flow-

ers lying in the shadow of the mountains rising directly behind the house.

The general appearance of the place led Hamilton to anticipate the choice Chippendale filling the rooms within. Most of it had belonged to Mrs. Burton's family, and she kept it so highly polished that mirrors were superfluous. Marita often said that the first requisite of a suitable maid was her ability as a polisher. So much dark old mahogany might not have suited the Judge, who liked things cheery, had it not been for Mrs. Burton's gift of making everything she touched attractive. She had a delightful way of slipping a pillow into a patriarchal chair; of disposing antique Turkish squares under the bronze lamps on the tables; of placing magazines and ash-trays on stiff-looking stands; of brightening dark corners with flowers and even giving a sociable air to the bookcases by strewing favorite volumes on top of the rows of books.

Mrs. Burton was one of those women whose exquisite taste creates an air of refinement. She liked only good things, and, fortunately for her contentment, had always eaten her food with a silver fork and sipped her tea from a china cup. She was an ideal hostess, and her cordial welcome made the coolness of Marita's greeting all the more pronounced.

As Hamilton dressed for dinner, a tall figure in pale green persistently rose before him, and he wondered if the Judge's daughter was going to be unapproachable or companionable. Her well bred, but distant demeanor downstairs was not promising; yet when Hamilton thought of the barefoot girl fishing under the willows, he could not help feeling that they would be friends—and perhaps her greeting was not so cool after all, for as his eyes roamed around the room they rested upon a tall, clear glass vase filled with long-stemmed roses of the deepest red. They were grouped with a certain free grace quite different from the delicate arrangement of the daisies and ferns he had noticed in the rooms below. Hamilton was sure that Marita had placed the roses here, and bending over them he revelled in their fragrance; as he turned away, a large thorn caught in his coat sleeve and the vase fell to the floor, crushing some of the flowers. Much annoyed, Hamilton gathered up the roses and replaced them as best he could, consoling himself with the thought that while the thorn had caused the petals to be bruised it had also been instrumental in laying bare the golden hearts.

This incident occurred to Hamilton several times

through the evening, and he couldn't help wondering if such wealth lay beneath Marita's reserve as the roses disclosed when their petals were shaken off. There were other things to wonder about, also. It was apparent that the Judge adored his wife and daughter and delighted in his home; he was known to have amassed a considerable fortune during a brilliant career, and his social position was enviable, coming, as it did, both from ancestral and personal prestige; but notwithstanding these happy conditions, there was that in the Judge's face which told of suffering, long endured and still keen. The lines were so deep that the marking must have taken many years—yet so intense that they might have been drawn yesterday, were it possible to sear a face as his was seared in so short a time. There was a tone, too, in his voice that went straight to your heart; it made you feel that here was a man to whom much might be confessed, because he could confess much.

To his wife the Judge gave that tender devotion so beautiful to see in a man whose hair is streaked with gray; his manner was almost reverent at times, but never tinged with the intensity which characterized his bearing towards Marita. This daughter was the heart of his heart, and he hungered for her nearness

as a lover might. She was the one person who could soften the lines in his face—and that only by the spell her violin cast over all listeners.

Grant Hamilton observed this on that first evening at Lindenhurst. He was sitting on the veranda with the Judge and Mrs. Burton while Marita was filling the air with the kind of music that makes one thrill as in the presence of an unseen power. By the light from the library windows Hamilton could see how the Judge's eyes lingered on every line of the lithe figure; how they wandered from the thick waves of chestnut hair to the dark eyes now lit with inward fire; how they dwelt upon the features, so like his own, and followed the motion of her hand as it drew from the violin an expression of her soul. The man was entirely absorbed in the girl he watched through the open window, and when she laid aside her Cremona he sat up in his chair and raised his eyebrows as if rousing himself from a dream.

Hamilton's observation was not limited to the Judge. He, too, watched Marita, thinking that if beauty is a dangerous rock to man, that subtlety known as fascination is a perilous cliff. "The rock," he thought, "causes man many a fall, but he picks himself up, goes on his

way, and, in time, his bruises heal. The cliff is another matter. Beauty attracts, but it does not hold. The woman who is more than an episode in a man's life has a power greater than beauty—and the Judge's daughter has that power."

Hamilton was right; Marita did have that power in large measure. It could not be defined; it was elusive, yet always there—a personal atmosphere created by the manifestation of a rare soul through a healthful body. She was full of spirit, and everything she did suggested capability. When she walked across the room, you wanted to see her do it again; when she spoke, you thought nothing could be more delightful until she laughed, and then you were ready to commit any absurdity to make her repeat that laugh. From her ardent eyes and rich vocal tones you knew that Marita was a woman of passionate nature; from her firm step and resolute mouth you knew that nature was balanced by strong character. This admirable poise was one of the most striking things about Marita; but you always wondered which way the scale would tip, were it put to a crucial test.

As Hamilton saw her that night, standing with the violin under her chin, eyes aglow and figure thrilled,

warm blood flushing her cheeks and breath coming fast through parted lips, he felt that when Marita loved she would forget everything. Later, when he saw her shut away the violin and gather the music into an orderly pile, he felt that even though Marita loved, she would remember everything. Were it otherwise, she would have left the violin uncased, the music scattered.

However that might be, Hamilton knew now that this rose held great richness within its petals, and he resolved that those petals should be folded back. Acting upon this resolution, when the Judge went to make his nightly visit to the stables to see that his pet horse, Salem, was properly cared for, Hamilton drew a cigar from his pocket and stepped through the low window into the library, where Marita was closing her cabinet of music.

"Will you take me to an ideal place for this?" he asked, holding up his cigar. "I'm sure there must be one somewhere around this delightful house."

"The balcony outside that window is a favorite place with father's friends," answered Marita. She indicated the window by a slight gesture, and was moving away when Hamilton said in a tone people generally heeded:

"I asked you to take me to the place."

Marita paused, her eyes looking into his with something in their depths which reminded him of a doe he had once brought to bay in the mountains. Ready to accept his challenge and battle to the last breath, Marita saw that in his face which made her hesitate an instant; then she turned, and without a word led the way to the balcony.

It was one of those nights when the air is full of magnetism. The crescent moon had disappeared long ago, but the heavens were clear and brilliant with stars. The earth was rich with moist fragrance, and the trees whispered as they never do in the daylight.

Marita stepped through the window.

"Well," she said, with a touch of defiance in her tone, "I have taken you to the place."

"Won't you do me another favor and occupy this seat?" asked Hamilton, placing a chair near the one he was about to take.

Now this was a master-stroke; a woman loves to grant favors to a strong-willed man. Marita accepted the chair with a quiet "Thank you." Hamilton was glad he didn't have his hat—he was sure he would have tossed it up in his human delight over getting exactly what he wanted.

"Your music was a great treat, Miss Burton," said Hamilton, lighting his cigar.

"I think you really appreciate music," she returned.

"Why do you think so?" he asked, looking at her profile outlined against the dark background of vines.

"Because you don't talk about it the moment the last note is sounded."

"I can't. I've often wished I could say the graceful things other people do; but the words refuse to come."

"That's just it—you enjoy the music so much that words seem inadequate, and you can't speak them."

"You are generous to offer such a kind reason for my lack of eloquence. But do tell me about your music," said Hamilton, knowing she would talk more freely of that than anything else. "You have always cared for it?"

"Always," replied Marita. "Ever since I can remember. I used to beg for a violin when they gave me dolls, and after I had one there was no such thing as a quiet hour at Lindenhurst."

"Did you have instruction?"

"Not until I went to Vassar; but I always loved it. A violin is such a speaking instrument! It answers

to your lightest touch, responding so readily to any mood and winding itself right into your life. Really it becomes a part of your thoughts and feelings."

"Lucky violin," thought Hamilton, only saying: "You're a true musician."

"I consider it a great privilege to be able to surrender to the spirit of music. It is such a glorious feeling. You thrill and throb and forget everything—even the notes. You just give yourself up to the luxury of living the melody, and the strings breathe under your fingers."

Hamilton smiled to himself in the darkness, thinking that here was a woman worth knowing. Then he said, earnestly:

"Do you remember Maggie Tulliver's words, 'Music seems to infuse strength into my limbs and ideas into my brain. Life seems to go on without effort, when I am filled with music'?"

"Why," said Marita, enthusiastically, "when I came to those words in 'The Mill on the Floss' I laid the book down and wrote the two sentences on a sheet of favorite music, I liked them so much."

While she was speaking, the Judge's footsteps sounded on the gravel path.

"Marita," he called.

"Yes, father," she answered. "Here I am."

The Judge came across to the balcony, and leaning on the railing, he looked up, saying:

"I wish you'd come down to the barn and tie up Sam's hand. He's given it an ugly cut."

"I'll come at once," Marita said. "Is it a bad wound?"

"Not very—it needs attention, though."

The Judge turned towards the barn again and Hamilton rose, throwing away his cigar as he said:

"You will let me go with you?"

"It isn't necessary; but if you'd like to——"

"I would," he answered, following her into the house. Marita disappeared for a few moments, and while Hamilton waited for her on the veranda his thoughts were not traveling far from Lindenhurst.

When she came out of the house he took the basin of water from her hand, exclaiming as he did so:

"Why, this is hot!"

"Of course it is. You don't suppose I'd dress a wound with unsterilized water?"

"Pardon me, I didn't know surgery was one of your accomplishments."

"It isn't," Marita said, with a laugh. "Here in the country we have to do for ourselves in case of emergency, and my mother dislikes the sight of blood, so I do this kind of thing."

On their way through the garden several pictures rose before Hamilton—one of a barefoot girl fishing in the shade of a willow, one of a self-possessed society woman at dinner, one of an artist swayed with the passion of music, and one of a practical helper with bandages in hand. As he watched the girl walking in front of him, he wondered if she would do her work without a quiver as she had prepared to do it without a fuss.

When they reached the barn Sam was sitting on a tool-box and the Judge stood near him holding a lantern. The dim light cast fantastic shadows on the rough walls hung with harness, and the occasional stamp of a horse's foot echoed into the hayloft. Marita knelt on the floor, commencing operations at once. Hamilton observed her closely, unable to detect any sign of nervousness as she cleansed and bandaged the injured hand.

"Where did she learn how to do this?" Hamilton asked the Judge as they both watched her deft fingers fly.

"Don't ask me," he answered. "I suppose she learned how to dress wounds the same way she learned to play a violin before she ever had a lesson."

"Hardly, father,' said Marita, smiling at him as she unrolled a package of antiseptic gauze. "Music may be instinctive, but surgical dressings are not. My room-mate at college met with an accident," she explained to Hamilton, "and I learned something from that experience."

Sam looked at his young mistress admiringly, and spoke with unusual emphasis in his customary drawl:

"Mis Marita c'n do anythin' she tries to."

CHAPTER II

THE next morning Hamilton rose early, intending to take a row on the river before breakfast. As he stepped out on the veranda, the glorious air thrilled through every fibre with that tingling sense of fresh life that comes only when the day is young. It was intoxicating, and as he watched the mist lift from the river and roll away he was possessed with a strong desire to shout aloud just for the joy of living; but out of regard for the quiet sleepers within, he restrained the impulse and started off at a brisk pace down the road.

People always spoke of Grant Hamilton as one of Fortune's favorites. Born an aristocrat, he had been educated at Columbia, like most of his ancestors, had seen a large part of the civilized world and had money enough to do as he liked. His face was strong rather than handsome. The long nose and deep-set eyes bore a marked resemblance to Alexander Hamilton's; the firm chin was tempered by the gentle mouth—yet that, as all his features, bore the stamp of determination.

It was a face that children loved and their elders trusted.

Hamilton lived in the upper part of New York City, where his widowed mother presided over the old family house with the dignity of a Colonial dame. She would not have exchanged the quaintness of Hamilton Grange for the elegance of any mansion in town. To her the house was imbued with the spirit of Alexander Hamilton, whose lineage she had studied until the names of his ancestors were as familiar to her as those of her own family. She could tell you all about the founders and branches of the ducal house of Hamilton, and, of course, she took particular delight in tracing the unbroken line from Bernard, brother Viking of Rolla, first Duke of Normandy, down to Alexander Hamilton, the twenty-seventh direct descendent.

The great man's brilliant career and tragic end were more than history to Grant. As a boy he had worshipped the hero—as a man he recognized a vital kinship with his ancestor in the tenor of his own mind and character. Accustomed to think for himself, firm in his convictions, strong in his passions, he was yet genial, frank and generous. Perhaps Alexander Hamilton's success at the bar had something to do

with Grant's feeling that he could never be anything but a lawyer. Certain it is, that when he learned his mother's wish that he should make literature his profession, he felt as if she were trying to deprive him of his birthright.

He never forgot that moment; it had always seemed to him that the words he spoke in reply were the first words of his manhood. Looking from his mother to the portrait of Alexander Hamilton hanging over the library hearth, he said:

"No, mother; with *his* blood in my veins I must enter active life. Nothing but positive contact with the world could content a man who has something of that man's spirit."

Mrs. Hamilton was too wise to combat the determination expressed in look and tone even more than words; so it was settled—though she always maintained that Grant would have made a great writer, citing his briefs, which were noted for their concise style and lucidity, as an illustration of what might have been.

Both briefs and clients were far from Grant Hamilton's thoughts as he swung along the dusty road on the way to the river side. This was the first vacation he had allowed himself since he began practising

law. He had expected to enjoy his fortnight at Lindenhurst when he accepted Judge Burton's invitation, though not anticipating the extent of the pleasure awaiting him. Hamilton did not know that the place was the kind of a spot he most delighted in; only enough of man's work visible to make the wildness livable; he did not know that the saddle-horses were so fine, the fish in the streams so plenty, the books so well selected. Nor did he know that the Judge's daughter would interest him so much.

He was thinking of Marita as he unfastened the boat and slowly pulled along the shore. Now, Hamilton knew women as well as any man of thirty-five, not gifted with supernatural powers, can know them. He had known the fire that is lit by their eyes—had once been burnt enough to bear a scar—but never had he met a woman who impressed him quite as Marita did. Whatever she said, whatever she did, conveyed the idea of reserve force. He felt that the tide of her inner life ran deep and strong—that its course could not easily be perverted—yet he knew that she was not self-sufficient. Marita had the independent dependence which men invariably delight in, and Hamilton was beginning to feel its charm.

Just now he was re-living the hours when she had filled the night with music, smiling to himself as he recalled Wordsworth's lines:

"The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more."

He was thinking that Marita's music left one with the sense of having received a benison, when suddenly his attention was attracted to the figure of a woman flying along the road. She was covering the ground with such speed that little could be distinguished except a short brown skirt and a blue shirt waist. Fearing something startling must have happened, Hamilton began pulling back. Then he saw that it was Marita—and surely she needed no assistance, for a happier, more rapturous face no man ever gazed upon. From the abandon of every move he saw that the air had intoxicated her too. Once she stretched up her arms to the trees above, as if she wished that "all creation had but one mouth that she might kiss it."

After running a little way she slackened her pace, turning into the river path. Marita's hat had been left at home this morning, and as she came down the bank her waving hair caught the sunbeams in the most

betwitching way. It was almost down, too—how Hamilton did wish that the last pin would give way! He was always hoping that some accident would send it rippling over her shoulders, but she had a provoking way of fastening it securely.

As Marita neared the water's edge she saw that the boat had disappeared, and looking down the river to see if it had drifted away during the night, she discovered Hamilton sitting in the missing craft, resting on the oars.

"You're more sensible than I thought you were," she called.

"Why?" he asked as he pulled towards her. "Did you think I was hopelessly addicted to the morning nap?"

"Yes," she answered frankly, "I did. I thought of you with pity when I came out to revel in the sunrise."

"I must confess I was only thinking about getting up when the sun rose."

"Even that is doing well for a city man," she said.

"You were going for a row?" he asked, stepping out of the boat and holding it for her.

"If you'll pull down to the spring, I'll pull back."

Marita's tact was one of her greatest charms. She knew Hamilton would feel uncomfortable on being caught running off with her boat when she wanted to use it, and this was a very pretty, as well as satisfactory, way of putting him at his ease.

"Thank you," said Hamilton, taking up the oars with alacrity. "Which way is the spring—up or down?"

"Both," she returned, laughing. "Down the river and up the mountain. It is a spring that bubbles right out of the rocks, and the water is delicious. I love to go there after—" She hesitated, and he suggested:

"After you've been playing Atalanta?"

"You saw me?" She paused a moment, and then, with a little shrug of her shoulders, continued, "I know it is a wild thing to do, but on a morning like this I *have* to run. There is something within me that will not be checked; it must be out and away, as free as a bird."

Hamilton looked at Marita with growing admiration and a sense of comradeship as he remembered his own longing to shout aloud. He liked her impulse, and he liked the fearless way in which she spoke of it.

"Don't try to check it," he said, smiling straight into

her eyes. This was a dangerous thing to do, for when you looked into those depths you longed to fathom their shadows at any cost; and when Hamilton longed to do a thing he generally did it.

Marita guided the boat to the spot where she wished to land, and designated the tree, which she called "the hitching-post." When they began to ascend the mountain she laughingly refused his aid, and, stepping lightly over the rocks, showed him a steep path which a stranger would never have seen. On reaching the spring she turned to him with sparkling eyes and glowing cheeks.

"There," she cried, "is the spring of everlasting life! Drink, and your soul will be refreshed."

Marita didn't look as if her soul needed refreshment, she was so thoroughly alive. Like a true mountaineer, she bent over the spring and made a drinking cup of her hand. Following her example, Hamilton dipped his hand in the water also, saying:

"Here's to the 'something within you that will not be checked'! May it long remain as it is."

Marita laughed at this, making no reply. She seated herself on a mossy stone, and looking up at Hamilton, asked:

"How do you like the water?"

"I never tasted a purer draught; and this woody dell is fit for the home of a nymph. Why, you have everything here—rocks and moss, ferns and flowers, trees and——"

"Spiders," interrupted Marita, brushing one away. "This nook has been a little of everything to me—nursery, schoolroom and sanctuary. I used to play here by the hour; the roots of that big tree over there, with a pile of twigs and stones, afforded me more amusement than toys. When I left off play for study, I always worked out the knotty problems here, weather permitting. Somehow, things were easier in this place."

"And the sanctuary?" questioned Hamilton, stretching himself at Marita's feet and resting his head on his hand.

"Well, I'm afraid I must own that I was a very bad child. I sometimes ran away on Sunday morning and came here instead of going to church. No amount of scolding or punishment could make me mend my ways or tell where I went. During the winter I behaved myself, from necessity; when the warm weather came I was often missing. I tried to be proper—I used to

make up my mind to go to church as I ought—but when the time came the birds called and the leaves beckoned and away I went to the woods."

"It was the 'uncheckable something' that took you."

"Perhaps it was—yes, it must have been."

They looked at each other and smiled. Then he said:

"I wonder if you remember the lines that have been running in my head while you've been talking?"

"'Overhead the tree-tops meet;
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;
There is nought above me and nought below
My childhood had not learned to know.'"

"Ah," she said, with a smile of recognition, "those are little Pippa's words; and they might have been written for me."

"Is Browning one of your favorites?" Hamilton asked.

"Yes," she replied, "he is. But I refuse to discuss poets before breakfast, and if we linger here any longer we'll have coffee and chops without flavor."

Marita insisted on rowing back because she had said she would. Hamilton sat in the stern and watched

her—glad that she pulled a good, steady stroke. It annoys a man to see a woman try to row when she doesn't know how.

After the boat was moored she led the way up the path and he followed, wondering how many women appreciated the blessing of an attractive back. Marita certainly had that indefinable something called style. She wore her bicycle skirt and shirt waist with an air that a princess might envy.

As they approached the house Mrs. Burton came out on the veranda, and seeing Marita's flushed cheeks and loosened hair she suspected a run, and was about to remonstrate when Hamilton exclaimed:

"Behold a merciful maid! She found me escaping with her boat, and not only forgave the offence, but allowed me to sit in the stern and admire her stroke."

"I'm hungry," was all Marita said as she disappeared in the house; but she thanked him with a look he did not soon forget.

CHAPTER III

AT the breakfast table Judge Burton announced his intention of taking a holiday, saying to Hamilton:

"Get on your regimentals and I'll show you some fishing that *is* fishing."

They were soon ready to go, and started off, as Marita said, "looking jolly enough for truant schoolboys." Crossing the meadows, they tramped over the hills, following an indistinct trail through the woods. Though Hamilton had angled in many waters, he never before had fished a mountain brook, pushing his way through tangled underbrush and wading deep to find quiet pools harboring trout. So wild were the haunts they sought that the fly-books were unopened, for the overhanging trees prevented the casting of a line; but the homely worms provided by the gardener were dropped into the stream with good results, and they sat down at noon, tired and hungry, though satisfied with life. Hamilton expressed his delight with their expedition while they lunched on sandwiches and fruit.

"Well," said the Judge, "to me there's nothing so restful as a day like this. It is such a relief to get away from it all—out into the freedom of the woods where everything is natural.'

Hamilton looked at his companion, somewhat surprised, not at the words so much as the tone, which seemed to him more intense than the occasion warranted; then he smiled to himself as he remembered Marita's similar expressions of the early morning, noting how the man's character had repeated itself in his daughter.

"When a man has reached my age," continued the Judge, "he grows impatient of conventions—weary, too, of always playing the part of the justice."

Had it not been for these latter remarks Hamilton would have given no further thought to the former; but the Judge spoke in a half-apologetic way, as if to explain the earnestness of his first words, and the speech that was meant to subdue wonder roused it. Often through the afternoon, as they wandered along the bank of the stream, Hamilton asked himself why the Judge found it "such a relief to get away from it all," and questioned the meaning of "it all." Being a keen observer of men and things, he looked at Judge

Burton with a new interest, and wondered if the lines in his face had been traced by the something from which he longed to escape.

Hamilton was still occupied with these thoughts when they left the brook and turned their steps homeward; but as they neared Lindenhurst his interest in this problem lessened, though it was not lost, even in the fancied visions of Marita meeting them at the door. She might—and it would be so delightful if she did. It is such a precious thing—this beginning of love—and to a person of imaginative temperament so fraught with sweet suggestions. Hamilton was not conscious of loving Marita—and, indeed, these first awakenings can scarcely be called love—but he was conscious of hoping that Marita would greet them on their return, and keenly disappointed when she did not. He walked upstairs rather impatiently, and it is to be feared that his neckscarf was not any too carefully untied.

Just before he went down to dinner Hamilton opened the blinds to admit the air, already cooling as the sun sank behind the trees. His face glowed with appreciation as he stood at the window, held by the beauty of the valley bathed in the high light that intensifies

color and yet seems to mystify everything—touched by the appealing poetry of the crescent moon, beginning her reign in the pale blue sky so soon to lose its opalescence in the duskiness of twilight.

"Another 'night divine,'" thought Hamilton, recalling the balcony talk of the previous night. "Strange how that girl is absorbed in her music; it's more than part of her nature—it's the essence of her soul. Such abandon to art is rare, especially in Americans; but then—she is intense—there's nothing lukewarm about her——"

His reverie was broken by the sound of the Judge's voice calling:

"Marita! Where are you?"

"Here I am. Do you want me?"

Hamilton smiled when he heard those words in the tones that were growing familiar, and left his room with a mingled feeling of contentment and unrest. He found the family on the veranda, and immediately observed that Marita looked particularly well in white. The clinging muslin revealed the grace of her figure, and as she came towards him Hamilton marvelled, as he often did, on the easy strength of her movements. All through dinner he was thinking that, notwith-

standing her irregular features, Marita was one of the most distinguished looking women he had ever seen. Her eyes and hair were matchless; if there was a lack of beauty elsewhere there was no lack of character; the olive skin glowed with health and the whole face was animated by a magnetism that attracted strong men because it was the outcome of a satisfying mental and physical maturity.

While they were still sitting around the table Doctor Earle was announced. Marita rose immediately, and the others followed her out on the veranda, where the gentlemen smoked their cigars with the caller.

Hamilton grew restless as the evening advanced; he had hoped for more music and a vantage point from which to watch the musician. This desultory conversation was wearisome, and somehow he wished the Doctor was less interesting. There was enough light coming through the wide doorway to enable him to see that Henry Earle had a remarkable way of handling his straight, athletic figure—indeed, Hamilton never remembered seeing a man who naturally posed so well. It was too dark to see much of his face, but his voice was delightful, and he certainly had an original turn of mind. After the laughter following

one of his inimitable stories had subsided, the Doctor lit another cigar, saying:

"Well, Mr. Hamilton, what do you think of Lindenhurst?"

"On that subject I do not believe even doctors would disagree. There could be only one opinion."

"It is delightful, isn't it? Such a perfect specimen of old-time architecture. This entrance is famous; of course Judge Burton has told you how often it has been copied? I'm going to subject that man's head to an X-ray some time, and I'm morally sure that the portion of the brain lying beneath the bump of pride will be plainly stamped with a reproduction of that doorway."

"If it is as you say," returned Mrs. Burton, "I'm equally sure that Marita will be found on the threshold."

The odd fancy amused them all, but Hamilton thought the Doctor seemed too much pleased with his own clever idea.

"'Marita.' That's a very odd name of yours, Miss Burton."

The Judge moved his chair as Marita replied to the Doctor's remark.

"It's unusual in this country."

"An Italian name, isn't it?" Earle persisted.

"It is," answered the Judge, rising abruptly. "If you don't mind, we'll go down to the barn and take a look at Sam's wounded hand."

Hamilton knew that the Doctor was not longing to go, but of course he rose and accompanied the Judge. Mrs. Burton rose also, and went inside to superintend the iced drinks.

"I was born in Italy," said Marita, turning towards Hamilton, "and spent the first years of my life there. Don't you suppose that has something to do with my love for music and violets?"

"Possibly," he replied indulgently. With all Marita's womanliness there was a childlike simplicity very winning to a man in whom the protective instinct is strong.

"I like to think so," she continued. "It pleases me to fancy that glorious Italy has infused some things into my blood."

"I believe it has," said Hamilton decidedly. "You have some Italian characteristics, rather strongly developed, I should say."

"What, for instance?" asked Marita.

"Well," he returned slowly, wishing she hadn't asked that question, "your power to abandon yourself so completely to the spell of music is certainly not an American trait—" He paused.

Marita waited a little before she said playfully:

"That's only one thing, Mr. Hamilton; and I believe you said 'characteristics.'"

"Now," he said, laughing, "you've turned the tables, and are cross-examining a lawyer. Just to establish your reputation as a gainer of information, I'll tell you another characteristic." He moved a little closer, and leaning forward said in a low tone: "It's the 'uncheckable something.'"

"That's an evasion!" she exclaimed triumphantly. "Now, seriously, don't you think that environment has a great influence upon character?"

"Undoubtedly," affirmed Hamilton. "Provided the environment is of long enough duration."

"A good point," said Marita, whose quick appreciation made her a delightful companion. "But may not even temporary surroundings have their effect—especialy if one is at an impressionable age?"

"Well, Miss Burton, I have always held that character is too deep to be moulded by transitory things.

So much of it comes to us as an inheritance and the rest is largely a growth fed by habits and thoughts upon which temporary surroundings have little effect."

Their conversation was of short duration, for they were soon interrupted by the return of the Judge and Doctor Earle. At a word from her father, Marita left them to get out her music. Both Earle and Hamilton watched her as she walked away, the Doctor plunging his hands into his pockets and exclaiming:

"Isn't she stunning in that white gown!"

Hamilton made no reply. He was vexed with himself for allowing this remark to irritate him; but it did, nevertheless.

"How is the evidence developing in the Austin case?" he asked the Judge, who then gave them a detailed account of the proceedings, as Hamilton felt sure he would; however, at the first sound of the violin the Judge stopped talking, soon losing himself in Marita's music as he had the night before.

She played with magnificent technique and much expression, too, yet Hamilton missed the ecstasy of the previous night. *Now* she was trying to give others pleasure; *then* she had revelled in music for the pure rapture of it. "Why was it?" he asked himself.

"Why did she feel restrained? Were there stirrings within her that made her more self-conscious? If so, who caused them?"

It was late when Marita and Hamilton acompanied the Doctor to the gate. He untied his horse, and saying good night, rode away, leaving them standing together.

Hamilton was a tall man, and Marita was just enough shorter so that, as they stood side by side, he must bend his head to look into her face. He bent it now.

"What was the trouble to-night—with the music?"

"Why, did you notice anything wrong?"

"Only that you did not play as you did last night."

"Unfortunately, one can't always be in the same mood."

"I know that; but there was a reason for this mood." Then, fearing he had said too much, Hamilton laid a detaining hand on her arm, saying: "Wait a moment; before you go in, *look up!*"

She did look up, and they stood silent, awed by the superb night that overarched and enveloped them. Marita looked and looked until the magnitude became almost oppressive. She drew a long breath.

"Now," he asked gently, "is the mood quite gone?"

"Yes," she answered; "entirely. I could play now and forget everything——"

"Because that," said Hamilton, indicating the star-lit sky, "has made you forget yourself."

"How you do understand people!"

"*Some* people," he returned. And they passed in out of the night.

CHAPTER IV

HAMILTON was one of the Judge's admirations. Marita had often heard her father enlarge upon his professional ability, his sterling qualities and his family connections. As is frequently the case with people who form their own judgments, she was inclined to be very critical where so much praise had been bestowed; therefore when Hamilton came to Lindenhurst he was on probation with Marita, but he had the virile power which always appeals to women, especially when it is qualified with the gentleness born of true culture; so it was not long before Marita was ready to endorse her father's opinion. She had always liked the spirit evinced by Hamilton's daily life, knowing he was one of the hardest-worked lawyers in New York City, though his fortune would enable him to live well without lifting his hand, and admiring the strong nature that chose to marshal its forces on the battlefield rather than exhibit them on the parade ground.

Marita was thinking of the incident at the gate as

she bent over the breakfast table arranging roses still wet with dew. The few men who can divine a woman's moods seldom let her know it—and nothing pleases her more—for it implies a keen interest, if no deeper feeling. Probably Doctor Earle could have understood her as well as Hamilton did, but he would not have dared to tell her so, and then she wondered if his sympathy would have been complete enough to satisfy her need as it was satisfied. With a woman's power of re-living things, she felt again the warmth of the firm hand on her arm, she heard the earnest voice say, "Look up." Yes, he had been lovely to her, and the way he had shielded her from her mother's disapproval in the morning—it was sweet to be so thoughtfully considered.

She was still bending over the roses when Hamilton entered the dining-room. Coming as he did from restless turnings and vague dreamings, he thought he never had beheld anything so tantalizing as that red rose in Marita's hair. Why didn't it loosen so he could fasten it in those waves that tempted his fingers every time he saw them? This longing was choked by the thought that he had no right to replace it—then something rushed over him, leaving a great de-

termination to win that right. While the tumult of his heart was declaring that Marita should be his wife, he was asking, "What kind of roses are those?" His own voice sounded far away, and he never knew what Marita replied; he was glad when Judge and Mrs. Burton came in, for he could not have spoken to her again without betraying the passion surging through him.

Hamilton often wondered how he got through that breakfast. Certainly he was most thankful to Mrs. Burton, who relieved him of a morning at the house by suggesting that he and Marita should ride down to the village with the Judge, who never used a carriage except in the worst weather.

"He would rather be soaked on a horse than cramped in a wagon," he said.

While Marita executed some errands for her mother, the Judge took Hamilton around the town, and as they rode through the main residence street, they met Doctor Earle, also on horseback. He was superbly mounted, and wore a perfect riding costume. For the first time Grant saw him in a good light, and though he was not surprised to find the Doctor handsome, a queer feeling stole over him, and a close ob-

server might have seen his lips tighten. Of course Earle turned about and rode with them—Hamilton knew he would when he first laid eyes on him. The Judge designated the points of interest as they passed through the village, and his guest tried to make intelligent observations, while he was wishing with all his might that somebody would be sick enough to need that doctor before they joined Marita; but the townspeople seemed to be provokingly well that morning, and on leaving the Judge, after meeting Marita, they were still a party of three instead of two, as Hamilton had hoped. He thought that Scotchman knew what he was talking about when he made the remark as to "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men."

As they rode away Hamilton looked back, and he fancied that Judge Burton's piercing gray eyes followed his daughter uneasily. Was he fearful of losing her? Hamilton saw the careworn look deepen in the kind face, and his own grew graver as he glanced at the two riding a little ahead. Quickening his pace, he overtook them while they were planning a ride for the coming week. Marita turned to him, saying:

"You would enjoy a canter over the hills and dinner at a quaint old inn, wouldn't you, Mr. Hamilton?"

"It sounds delightful."

"Then you may count us in the party, Doctor; and I think there can be no better rendezvous than Lindenhurst—it is a convenient distance for you all, and near the Ridge Road."

"Yes," replied Earle, "Lindenhurst is a good place —for everything."

Thinking he detected an unpleasant emphasis on the last two words, Hamilton looked at the Doctor, who was riding on the other side of Marita, and their eyes met. It was as if they had measured swords.

There is probably nothing in the world that puts a man on his mettle as the presence of a rival does; however, there are different mettles. The Doctor was a brilliant talker, and this morning he kept up a fire of wit and wisdom that strongly contrasted with Grant's quiet words. Indeed, the more Earle talked, the less Hamilton said, and when they reached home Marita felt as if she had witnessed a clever display of mental gymnastics executed in the presence of a spectator who had as much strength as the performer, but chose to use it differently.

The Doctor was on the Lindenhurst side of the road, and as they neared the gate he gradually led his horse

a little in advance. Guessing his purpose, Hamilton drew in his rein, and as Marita passed him, wheeled his horse across the road, sprang to the ground and was at her side to assist her before the Doctor had even dismounted. It was done so quickly and neatly that Earle couldn't help admiring the man, though his chagrin deepened when he saw the smile Marita gave Hamilton as he lifted her down. She immediately turned to the Doctor, however, and asked him to come in to luncheon. He did so, but though Marita talked with him even more than with Hamilton, he couldn't help feeling that the other side had scored a point, and when he left Lindenhurst early in the afternoon his humor was not a pleasant one.

As for Hamilton, he knew he was unreasonably elated. His maneuver had been a trifling thing, after all, and yet, he had succeeded in his attempt, and she had been near him—so near—for one blessed instant. He lay on the sofa in the library living it over and over. Almost opposite was the fireplace, blackened by the smoke arising from the fires of many generations; above it was a shelf, adorned with several choice bits of old delft, over which hung an oblong mirror in a frame of pale dull gold. The blinds

were closed, and the room had the cool dimness so grateful in summer.

Hamilton was alone, for Mrs. Burton was resting and Marita had disappeared soon after the Doctor's departure. His attention was attracted by the artistic arrangement of daisies and ferns in a blue jar so placed on the shelf above the fireplace that they reflected their grace in the mirror. Then his thoughts wandered to the image above their own hearth at home, and he seemed to see the familiar features of Alexander Hamilton in the glass, but he no sooner saw them than they vanished, for Marita's face really appeared in the mirror as she entered the room through the hall door directly opposite the fireplace. Hamilton had seen his ancestor so distinctly that the incident, slight as it was, left an impression, and afterwards he remembered it as one of those strange presages that baffle analysis.

"I hope I didn't disturb you," said Marita, when she discovered the lounger.

"Oh, no," he answered. "I was not sleeping—only dreaming—trying to laze away a slight headache."

"You are not accustomed to being in the sun so

much," she suggested, moving towards the piano at the other end of the room. Without further remark she quietly uncased her violin and began to play. It was another instance of her womanly tact—trusting to her intuition that music would be soothing—and giving so simply that which he needed.

Hamilton never knew what Marita played that afternoon; he heard the wave of melody as if it came from spiritland, so absorbed was he in watching the woman he loved; yet those sounds were echoing through him far into the night.

It must have been an hour or more before Marita laid aside her violin, and crossing over to Hamilton, asked him, as he had asked her the night before:

"Is it quite gone?"

He looked up and met her eyes.

"Yes, entirely," he answered, as she had.

The remembrance of stars was between them, and the consciousness of increasing sympathy.

"I am glad," said Marita, crossing over to the low window. She unclosed the blinds and stepped out on the balcony, exclaiming:

"Oh! Come and see these storm clouds!"

Hamilton lost no time in reaching her side, and

together they watched the great black mass darken the sky. Up from behind the mountains the wind rose like a demon, sweeping down the slope, bending the trees and tearing off leaves in its fury. Thunder rolled from hill to hill, and lightning streaked the sky.

"I glory in a storm!" said Marita, her eyes shining.

"Yes, I should expect you to," replied Hamilton thoughtfully.

"That is not an Italian characteristic, though."

"No," he answered, smiling; "and yet, absence of fear and delight in the untamed elements are not incompatible with the 'uncheckable something.'"

"Did you choose your profession because of your ability to carry a point?"

"No, indeed," he said, laughing, then added, seriously. "My profession was never chosen, it was the natural outcome of a desire that grew with me from the cradle, I think. As I look back upon my boyhood, there is no more distinct impression of those early years than my ambition to become a lawyer as Alexander Hamilton was. The career of a great man often has a direct influence upon the lives of his descendents."

"I have always had the deepest admiration for that man," Marita said earnestly. "His intellect was so clear, his will so irresistible! He was so wonderful in his ability to foresee results and order affairs accordingly; and then for a man to rise, as he did, to the highest in everything he attempted—it was superb!"

As Hamilton listened to these words his hands tightened on the railing he was leaning upon. To hear her speak thus of one who had really been a power in his life, it was like welding a bond already strong. He longed to unburden his heart, but he knew the time was not yet come, so, though wild impulses struggled within him and he dared not look at Marita, he said slowly and with apparent calmness:

"To most women he is merely a man who was killed in a famous duel."

"Are you not a little severe?"

"Possibly, but——"

"So was he," interrupted Marita, "and here comes the rain, torrents of it!"

CHAPTER V

WHEN Marita awoke on the morning of the horseback excursion, she found the sunlight giving every promise of fair weather. She was very glad, for it was Hamilton's last day, and she wanted it to be a pleasant one. They were to start soon after breakfast, so Marita dressed for the ride, fastening her habit with the satisfied air of a woman who knows her costume is faultless and becoming. She was conscious of a thrill of excitement, and she knew it was caused by something more than the anticipation of an enjoyable trip.

Hamilton was a man of such strong passions that, though he could control them, he could not entirely conceal them. Perhaps he did not try to hide his love for Marita, perhaps he wanted her to see it and grow accustomed to it, before he expressed in words that which was so apparent in look and tone. However this was, she knew that he cared, and while she hoped he would not speak to-day, and was determined to prevent him if possible, yet, realizing that Hamil-

ton's time was limited, and that the Doctor's persistent devotion always exasperated him, she felt as if the air was electrified.

Marita's knowledge of the world was unusual for a woman of twenty-six, probably because there is no better enlightener than experience with the human heart. She knew the power of her personal magnetism, and she also knew that the charm exercised by this quality alone seldom stood the test of absence. Infatuation is a poor substitute for the love upon which women base their lives, and knowing that her happiness depended upon Hamilton's feeling being nothing less than love, she wanted him to leave her with no spoken words to bind him. Then, if he returned, she would put her trust in the man to whom she had given her love.

It was all very well for Marita to reason so clearly when she was alone; when she was with Hamilton it was quite a different matter. How could she discriminate between infatuation and love when he looked into her eyes, drawing her soul into his and holding it there? A woman's delight in such absorption is all the greater if her personality is a strong one. It is the joy of giving where there is much to

give. Marita thought of this, and felt that it would be very hard to ward off the words she longed to hear, but trusting that strength would come when the need arose, she went down with the air of good-fellowship, which is the hardest of all things for a lover to overcome.

On encountering Hamilton in the lower hall Marita dropped him a mock courtesy to avoid meeting his eyes, which were full of fire.

"Come and pay your respects to Old Sol," he said, stepping towards the veranda.

"Come and pay yours to the cook," she returned saucily, moving in the opposite direction, and quickly sliding into the dining-room, where Mrs. Burton was placing a cut-glass bowl full of strawberries on a mass of their fresh green leaves. "Oh, isn't that lovely!"

"Do you like it?" asked Mrs. Burton of Marita, while Hamilton, who had followed her, replied:

"It is positively a work of art!"

"Yes," said Marita, with a fond look at her dainty mother; "she is truly artistic."

"Not more so than you are, my dear."

Marita shook her head.

"If I have any artistic sense it is of a very different kind."

"As different as French and Italian art," suggested Hamilton.

"Italy again?" Marita raised her eyebrows.

"What's that about Italy?" asked the Judge, entering the room as his daughter spoke.

"Just nonsense," answered Marita. "Mr. Hamilton delights in tracing imaginative Italian elements in my composition to all sorts of impossible ends. I suppose it's because he must have something to argue about, and since his real cases are pigeon-holed during his vacation, he takes a fanciful one."

They all smiled at this sally except the Judge, who looked at Hamilton with a curious expression and remained unusually quiet throughout the entire meal.

Before they had finished breakfast Marita saw the party from town coming up the hill, and excusing herself went out on the veranda to meet them; as she stood on the steps waiting for them to dismount, her hand crushed a spray of wistaria, and she saw only a pair of deep, determined eyes.

When Hamilton appeared he was presented to the pretty Miss Marvin, with social ambitions, and Miss

Andrews, a young woman who wore eyeglasses and thought she was brilliant because she quoted so aptly from Shakespeare. The gentlemen of the party consisted of Doctor Earle, who greeted Hamilton with the cordiality sometimes bestowed upon those we are least glad to see; Norman Rives, an artist whose work gave promise of better things; and Mr. Bellenden, a Harvard graduate who had carried into business circles the eleverness of a man whose knowledge of Greek and Latin grammar is far greater than his appreciation of Homer and Virgil.

It was not long before the group on the veranda hailed the arrival of the chaperone, Mrs. Alison, who rode up with the man always spoken of as "Mrs. Alison's husband." She was an energetic little body, so genuine that she scorned even a dash of powder, and so full of fun that she insisted on riding a white horse "because her hair was so awfully red, and she did love to humor tradition."

Hamilton liked her immensely, and rode with her until they reached a wayside spring, several miles from Lindenhurst, where they stopped to drink the clear cool water trickling into the basin of moss-covered stones. From this point they could see the river

flowing at the base of the mountain, far below them —and in the distance, beyond the ripening fields, a single white spire rose from the clustered roofs and tree-tops of a village among the hills.

Marita had walked her horse a little way from the others, and was revelling in the beauty of it all. Her delight deepened until she slightly shook her head as we do in the presence of something so fine that we long to absorb it—and, knowing that we cannot, almost unconsciously give this outward sign of our inability. Hamilton watched her, and every pulse throbbed as he looked. "Heavens, how that woman could love!" he thought, and he deliberately rode up to her side. Before either one of them spoke, the Doctor joined them, and all three turned to follow the others. Hamilton was very quiet as they rode along; indeed, he scarcely heard what his companions were saying. He was wondering whether, to-morrow this time, he would be blessing every breath he drew, or cursing the hour he was born, for he meant to open his heart to Marita before he went away. By the time they reached Farno's Inn, where they were to dine, Hamilton was so divided between a determination that she *must* love him and a great fear that she didn't

and wouldn't, that he was not in an enviable state of mind. Desiring to regain his equilibrium, he left the others and took a turn down the road alone.

While Hamilton was gone Doctor Earle improved the opportunity of talking with Marita, who was resting in a cool corner of the inviting piazza.

"Are you tired?" he asked.

"A little," she answered, "just a pleasant degree of tiredness."

"It was a delightful ride, and this place is certainly worth coming to."

"One generally thinks so, especially after dinner."

"Dinner!" exclaimed Mrs. Alison, coming up to them in time to catch the last word. "That's what we're all thinking of, and dinner in this place is so well cooked and well served that it's something to dream of, no nightmare either!"

"I don't see how such a master of culinary art as Farno is ever came to settle in this out of the way spot." said the Doctor. "Why, he could make a fortune in the city."

"He doesn't starve here," argued Marita. "And perhaps the freedom of this life is worth more to him than extra dollars."

"Possibly," returned Mrs. Alison, "though one doesn't look for sentiment in cooks."

"I believe," said Marita, "that something fine underlies every personality excelling in the accomplishment of any one thing, even cooking."

"You can support your beliefs altogether too well for me to dispute you," replied Mrs. Alison, half humorously; then glancing around, she asked: "Where is your friend Mr. Hamilton? He's such an interesting talker!"

"Yes, isn't he?" said Marita, trying to speak indifferently, while she was thrilling as every woman does when the man she loves is mentioned.

"I have seldom met a man who had more to say or said it better. I like him, he impresses one as a man of great character."

"I should say rather as a man of great strength, but questionable control," remarked the Doctor coolly.

Marita was so surprised at his discourtesy—and indignant, too, for she felt sure he knew the untruth of his criticism—that she could not reply at once. Mrs. Alison gave the Doctor a penetrating look as she said:

"That is not my impression, though it wouldn't be

strange if uncontrollable impulses were found in a descendent of Alexander Hamilton, as I think you said he was?" turning to Marita.

"Yes, a direct descendent," she replied abruptly.

"I don't suppose Alexander Hamilton's influence on our country has ever been fully appreciated," continued Mrs. Alison, scenting something unpleasant, and thinking it best to do the talking herself. "I remember hearing my father say that history showed few instances where such great results had been achieved, without money and influence, solely by the might of one man."

While Mrs. Alison was speaking, Marita saw Hamilton nearing the inn, walking slowly and switching the roadside weeds with a stick he had cut and trimmed. When he noticed them he quickened his pace, and as he came down the piazza Marita thought she had never heard a more characteristic tread, it was so firm and steady; as he approached, Mrs. Alison addressed him:

"We were just talking of your famous ancestor."

"Alexander Hamilton?"

"Yes," she replied. "We were speaking of his

wonderful ability to achieve things in the face of adverse circumstances."

"Largely due to his power of concentration," returned Hamilton.

"Which is a great gift," Marita added, thinking she knew some people who had it.

"Well," said the Doctor, "the man's attainments were remarkable considering all he had to contend with."

Hamilton hesitated an instant, and then replied:

"Certainly it must have been difficult to rise, as he did, in a strange country, without wealth or friends."

"No career is easy when it begins with uncertain parentage."

As Doctor Earle spoke these words he looked straight at the man he insulted. Hamilton, who was standing, leaning against a post, never moved a muscle, but Marita saw the color leave his lips, and her heart gave a great bound, realizing how much he was hurt.

"Birth is the one thing for which no man is responsible," said Hamilton, returning the Doctor's look with unflinching eyes.

Marita could scarcely restrain her delight in his

splendid self-control. She found it difficult to content herself with saying:

"True, and if a man must labor under the stigma of illegitimacy his success should be doubly crowned!"

"But," said Mrs. Alison, "as I understand it, no one knows the real truth concerning Alexander Hamilton's birth."

"The best authorities, I believe, consider it irregular," replied the Doctor. Hamilton wondered how much longer he could keep his hands away from that man.

"Dinner is served," called Mr. Bellenden from the doorway, where the rest of the party stood waiting.

Marita rose, and stepping towards Hamilton spoke with a tremor in her voice.

"Will the gentleman who has the honor to be descended from Alexander Hamilton take me in to dinner?"

He looked into the loyal brown eyes, and forgot to reply, such balm did he find in their depths. He merely inclined his head, and they passed into the dining-room together.

After dinner they all started for Hunter's Falls,

leaving the road a short distance from Farno's, and turning into a path slippery with pine needles dropped from the branches above. Everywhere were the greens and browns and grays of the woodland softly blending in sunlight and shadow. Ferns and bluebells grew on the rocks wherever the lichens gave them a lodging place, and each fallen tree was a rioting ground for some vine. They followed the winding path for some distance, and as it grew steeper, the sound of rushing water reached them, though the falls were not yet in sight.

"Hark!" said Marita, stopping a moment. "That's the sweetest music in all the world!"

"Except yours," returned Hamilton, speaking in a low tone full of tenderness.

Oh, how Marita longed to look up and drink from the well of love in his eyes; but she only gave her head a little shake, and raised a protesting hand as she moved up the path.

When they had viewed the falls from various points, Mrs. Alison suggested that they climb up one side, which was rough but not impassable, and see how the stream looked before falling its foamy length. This proposition was greeted with delight, and while the

ladies securely pinned their habits, Hamilton went on ahead to assure himself that it was safe.

"It's a rather hard climb, but I think you can make it," he called back.

The other gentlemen assisted the ladies, and Hamilton remained at the top to help them up over the hardest place of all. Just below the rock where he stood there was a long reach with no possible rest for the foot except a clump of moss and small ferns growing on a slight projection. When Marita, who was the last lady to ascend, placed her foot on this spot, the moss and dirt, loosened by the others, gave way, and she would have fallen fifty feet if Hamilton, who held both of her hands, had not thrown himself back and pulled her over the edge. Only a man of such strength and presence of mind could have saved her.

"So awkward of me," said Marita, not realizing how great the danger had been. Nobody replied, and glancing from one to another she saw a terror in every face, and in Hamilton's eyes a look she never forgot.

"Ye gods!" exclaimed the Doctor, as he scrambled up over a different rock. "That was a narrow escape!"

Marita looked at Hamilton. He stood perfectly still, almost rigid. His face was white and tense.

"You saved my life."

"Don't," he said, drawing back as if afraid she would thank him.

"No," she answered, understanding what he meant, and adding almost in a whisper, "Only—I'm so glad it was you at the top."

Then feeling she had said quite enough, Marita turned aside, brushing off her habit.

They went down by another passage, which proved safer, and the homeward trip was made without further incident. It was late when they reached Lindenhurst, tired and quite ready for the tempting supper Mrs. Burton had prepared for the party. To Marita and Hamilton that meal seemed interminable; but when the last guest had ridden away, instead of seeking an opportunity to speak with her alone as she hoped he would, for she was ready to waive her resolution of the morning, Hamilton said to Mrs. Burton and Marita, as they stood together on the steps:

"If you'll excuse me, I think I'll take a last look at the river."

And saying good-night he left them standing there.

Marita went up to her room, and throwing the blinds wide open, dropped on the floor by the window and looked out into the night. Slowly the waning moon rose behind the mountains, shedding its light over the tops of trees and casting weird shadows around the house. No bird nor insect raised a note. Through the stillness Marita heard the muffled sound of her heart, throbbing out its pain.

"Why, why, why?" it said. Then suddenly it ceased to question, for it knew. With passionate certainly she clasped her hands; surely—surely he would not ask for her love the day he had saved her life! She worshipped him for his silence; she knew that this was not the spirit of infatuation, and in her joy she whispered over and over:

"Some other time—some other time!"

CHAPTER VI

ON a Saturday afternoon late in August, Hamilton entered a parlor car in the Erie Depot at Jersey City, with a step which matched his heart in lightness. He was going to attend a house party at Tuxedo —and Marita would be among the guests.

Since leaving Lindenhurst, Hamilton had paid frequent visits to the book shops, while certain Broadway florists and music dealers had grown to look upon him as a regular customer. Of course such favors were duly acknowledged by Marita, and through these letters—for he received more than notes of thanks—he learned that she, also, would be at Chester Towers tonight. Full of anticipation, he settled himself in his chair, pleased with the perfection of the violets packed away in his dress-suit case, and feeling that this world is a very good place to live in.

Across the aisle sat a boy with one of those thoroughly alive faces that always attract attention. He was about thirteen, and evidently starting on his first

journey alone; as the train began to move Hamilton heard the boy's mother say from the platform:

"Don't forget to telegraph just as soon as you get there."

"I won't," and he waved his cap out of the window.

Hamilton thought he'd like to talk to a boy with such snappy eyes, so after they had passed through the tunnel he ventured to remark:

"Nice day to travel."

"Fine," was the reply.

"Are you off on a vacation trip?"

"Going to my grandfather's. He's got a dandy farm up in Orange County."

"Let's hear about it," taking an unoccupied chair next to the boy; then, knowing it would please him, Hamilton opened a leather case and offered him a card. The young face glowed with pleasure at this treatment, and Hamilton was immediately presented with a pasteboard, cleaner than might be expected, on which he read :

Ralph Chisholm, Jr.

"I think I know your father. Isn't he a lawyer with an office in the Equitable Building?"

"You bet he is! Do you really know him?"

"I've heard him argue cases in court—you see I'm a lawyer, too."

"Say, isn't this jolly!"

"I think so," said Hamilton, who was much interested. "I'd like to hear about that farm."

"Nicest place I know of!" exclaimed Ralph. "They've got five dogs up there and a pony that can beat anything—she goes like the wind!"

"Do they let you ride her?"

"Only when Uncle Bob goes along; but I tell you we make him hustle to keep up!"

"I fancy you do," said Hamilton.

"Yes *sir!* And you ought to have seen him the day I chased the hens with rotten eggs! My, wasn't he mad!"

Hamilton laughed over this instance of the irony of fate, and asked Ralph if the fishing was good near the farm.

"Bully fishing—we get bass in the river, and go up the brook for trout. It's great fun, unless you tumble into the water and get your lunch all wet, like

I did one day. I didn't mind the soaking, but the grub was no good, and it takes the edge off your sport when you're hungry."

"I should think so," replied Hamilton sympathetically.

Ralph chatted on about his various exploits, and Hamilton listened with amusement, saying just enough to keep the boy going. They were about five miles from Tuxedo, and Ralph was recounting a hairbreadth escape on the pony, when suddenly the train came to a standstill. Everybody waited quietly for a moment or two; then people began craning their necks out of the windows to see what had happened, and a few of the men left the car. The conductor passed through, and Hamilton asked him the cause of the stop.

"Freight train jumped the track ahead of us."

"How long will it keep us here?"

"Hard to tell—probably a couple of hours or more."

Two hours or more! That meant hurrying into his dress suit, dinnerless, while other men were dancing with Marita, and the violets would hide their beauty in a box instead of gracing her gown as he had hoped. It was really too bad, but what could he do? Then, in the midst of his perplexities, it occurred to Hamilton

that he could easily walk it and reach there yet in time for dinner; of course, why didn't he think of that before? When he rose to his feet, Ralph eagerly asked:

"May I go with you to see the wreck?"

"See here, youngster, how far do you go?"

"To Greycourt."

"Will somebody meet you?"

"Oh, sure! Uncle Bob'll be there, crosser'n two sticks if the train's late. Where you goin'?"

"Tuxedo," said Hamilton rather abruptly.

"We're not far from there, are we?"

"Only about five miles."

"You could hoof that, couldn't you?"

"Yes, I could. But I don't—think—I will."

"I'm awfully glad!" Ralph said with so much earnestness that Hamilton couldn't regret his decision to stay with the young fellow who would have such a lonely wait if he left him. It was characteristic of Hamilton that if he once made up his mind to do a thing, he did it as well as possible; having decided that he ought to remain with the boy, he resolved to turn the delay into a good time—for Ralph. Still, Hamilton was human, and the thought of those violets made it very hard to say:

"Come on now, we'll take a look at that wreck."

As they walked along the side of the track Hamilton heard a man, who had been sitting in their car, say to the conductor, "I'll make Tuxedo long before you do," and watched him start off at a brisk trot. It required some effort to give his attention to Ralph, especially when he saw what a pile of débris must be removed before their train could pass, and realized that it would take fully two hours, if not more. However, he devoted himself to showing the boy all there was to be seen and explaining things as well as he could.

"What do you say to hunting up some supper?"

"I don't mind," said Ralph, with a grin, wondering how Mr. Hamilton knew so well what boys would like.

They started up a country road in search of some farm-house, and after passing one where an irate woman answered their polite inquiry by saying, "I don't keep no lunch counter goin'," they found a charming old place with a well in the front yard, and huge elms shading a latticed porch, where a lame little girl sat beside her mother. Hamilton explained their predicament, and they were graciously asked to sit down while the woman prepared some food. She

soon reappeared, bearing a tray laden with cold chicken, biscuits, sliced peaches and cream. Placing this feast between them on the board seat, they "had lots of fun eating up their appetites," as Ralph expressed it.

Hamilton knew that this woman, who impressed him as one longing for higher things, of which, perhaps, she had only a dim conception, would take no pay, so he handed her one of his business cards, saying:

"My services are always at your command."

Courtesy rarely came into her life, and she was as much pleased as she would have been insulted if he had offered her money. As he went out of the gate he turned and lifted his hat once more, making a mental note to express a box of books to that lame child as soon as he returned to New York.

The sun was getting low, and the walk back to the wreck would have been delightful if Hamilton had not been thinking unspeakable things about that abominable freight train; but Ralph never guessed that there was any disturbance in his companion's mind—he thought Mr. Hamilton told the best stories, and was altogether the jolliest man he knew; indeed, he was almost sorry when their train actually started, though to Hamilton there had never been a more

welcome sound than the first creak of those moving wheels.

When they rolled into the hill-girt station at Tuxedo, nearly three hours late, Hamilton bade Ralph good-by, promising to telegraph his father that the train was delayed, but all safe.

The beauties of Tuxedo Park did not delight Hamilton as much as the speed of the horses that bowled the carriage over the smooth roads at a rate satisfying even to a belated lover. By the time he reached Chester Towers the gay party in the dining hall had finished the game course; while they were occupied with salad and dessert Hamilton quickly changed his clothing, though when he was announced to the company lingering over the cordials, his perfect evening attire showed no signs of haste.

Lawrence Chester rose and welcomed his guest with the winning cordiality which so endeared him to his friends. After the greetings and presentations were over, Hamilton explained his late arrival and said that he had dined, thinking of the contrast between that simple tray and this table, furnished with Tiffany's best. The butler drew out the vacant chair and Hamilton seated himself, wondering how he could keep a

level head with Marita sitting almost opposite looking like that! He had never seen her in evening dress before, and the pale green gown she wore enhanced her coloring to the bewilderment of poor Hamilton, who was lost in admiration of the creamy skin and bronze waves. It has been said that love is a great beautifier; however it may be, it seemed to Hamilton that each line of Marita's face had softened—that something had lent a bewitching charm to every feature. Though her large mouth and irregular nose must always prevent her from being called a beauty, she was, without question, the most *distingué* woman present. It was maddening to watch the turn of her head, so exquisitely poised on shoulders that—well, he had to look at some one else.

As he glanced around the table, he recognized in one of the gentlemen to whom he had just been presented, the man who told the conductor that he would reach Tuxedo before the train did. Hamilton was just thinking that it was well he didn't know that man was also bound for Chester Towers, when his host remarked:

"Well, Hamilton, this is the first time I have ever had occasion to question your energy. Norton, here,

walked five miles, and knowing you were on the same train, we supposed you would do likewise. He never walks—except around the golf links—and you're a regular tramp."

"I would have done so had it not been for my traveling companion."

"She must have been awfully attractive," drawled out one of those men, not by any means rare, who seem to enjoy being social blights.

"My companion was not a lady," returned Hamilton with as little asperity as possible under such provocation.

"I can vouch for the truth of that statement," interposed Mr. Norton, who appeared to be very much of a gentleman. "Mr. Hamilton was devoting himself to a young boy."

"Some one put in your charge?" Lawrence Chester asked.

"No, not even that for an excuse. Just a little chap taking his first trip alone."

"And you turned that long wait into a lark for him—it's just like you," said Mr. Chester, adding heartily: "Ladies and gentlemen, fill your glasses; we drink to the health of Grant Hamilton."

Marita could scarcely swallow, but she drained her glass, and over its brim Hamilton caught a look more intoxicating than champagne. She was so proud of him, so happy in his presence, so radiant in the surety of his love; all this, and more, he saw in that glance. They were both glad when Mrs. Chester rose, and the ladies left the gentlemen to their cigars.

Marita went straight to her room—she must have a few moments alone. The lights were lowered, and at first she did not see the box of violets which Hamilton had dispatched by a maid before he went down. She went to the open window, but the night air failed to cool her hot cheeks, and turning to bathe them, she saw the box on her dressing-table. With eager fingers she untied the ribbons, and burying her face in the purple fragrance, Marita kissed those violets again and again. Drawing a long breath of delight, she raised her head and noticed his card, on which was written:

"Will you wear them?"

Would she wear them! Ah, how quickly the lights went up, and how carefully those violets were fastened, high on the shoulder and over the breast glowing with passionate joy. She smiled at the reflection

in the mirror, knowing how the harmony of gown and garniture would please him, and her face burned more than ever as she went to join the ladies below.

When Hamilton entered the drawing-room, he looked for the slender figure in green, hoping to see the added touch of purple, yet scarcely expecting that she would find the flowers until the evening was over; but she had found them—she wore them—and as he approached her, the light in her eyes was to him as a beacon to the mariner.

"Your violets are not as fresh as they would have been—"

"I like them all the better for that delay—and thank you *so* much."

Hamilton hoped that Marita would continue talking, but she was not in a conversational mood, so he finally remarked:

"It is fortunate for me that dinner here was so late—I'm in time for the first dance after all."

"You like to open the ball?"

"Yes, to-night I do." Then, as he heard the strains of a waltz and saw Mrs. Chester rising, he said, "Will you honor me?"

"With pleasure," she replied; and they followed

the others through the great hall hung with armor, past the library and music-room, into the beautiful pink and white ballroom.

Hamilton had been thinking of this dance ever since he learned that Marita would be here, and when he drew her into the rhythmic circles it was like realizing a dream. Their dancing was perfect harmony of motion; swaying with the same strain, gliding together with the music, they knew that their hearts were united as completely as their steps.

It was late before they had another dance together, for Marita was in great demand, and Hamilton was too well-bred to neglect the other ladies; but at last he led her out again—once more he felt her lithe figure yielding to his guidance; once more he held the woman he loved, and her nearness thrilled him until everything grew dim, and then they found themselves out in the starlight—alone.

"Marita?" he whispered, opening his arms.

"Yes," she breathed, and their lips met.

CHAPTER VII

"YOU knew I loved you when I was at Lindenhurst?"

"Yes," in a low tone.

"And you knew why I did not speak before I left?"

"Yes," still lower.

"Speak to me, dear. Tell me how glad you are."

"Oh, I *am* glad—so glad! This tells you," and bending towards Hamilton as he lay on the ground at her feet, she drew his head into her arms, laying her lips upon his.

They had slipped away, as lovers will, and were spending the morning beside a brook overhung with trees, so in harmony with the quiet spirit of the day of rest that the leaves hung almost motionless, not even stirring enough to rustle. Except when a squirrel scampered through the underbrush or a bird trilled out a song, the only sound was the gurgle of the water rippling over the stones. Nature seemed to smile at them, saying: "Be content; all is well." And they were content—happy with the happiness that comes

but once in life, joyful with the joy of loving as only man and woman—not youth and maiden—can love. Both had known that exquisite flower of the heart called first love; and both knew that this later bloom was far richer, deeper, more precious. Looking into each other's eyes, they read a fair promise of the future—they saw there the completion of love so satisfying to the mature heart. Trust in each other, soul kinship with each other and passion for each other—this was their creed.

"Marita," said Hamilton, "tell me when you began to care? Do you know?"

"I think I cared from the very first, but I wasn't conscious of any attraction towards you until that night when you understood me so perfectly—when we were standing under the stars and you said, 'look up.' Do you remember?"

"I remember everything that happened, dear; and it was the very next morning that a positive determination to make you my wife rose out of the indefinite longings which had been stirring ever since the first time I heard you play. Your violin was the key that unlocked my heart; it also told me that the love of a woman who could abandon herself so completely to the

passion of music would be—as sweet as it is," and his voice sank into a whisper as he drew her face down to his.

"That," she said, after a happy pause, "is one of my Italian characteristics."

"Even so," he replied. "The Italian women can love. You have their strength of passion, and higher attributes they seldom possess."

"I don't know; I only know I love you."

"God bless you!" he said fervently. Then, looking up with ardent, pleading eyes, he clasped her hands in his, saying slowly:

"Marita, you'll not keep me waiting long?"

"No," she stammered. "I—I—couldn't."

"Ah," he exclaimed, springing to his feet and lifting her up in his arms, "there is no one like you! What a wife you will make, you perfect woman!"

Throwing her head back, Marita said in her piquant way:

"Now, how can you say that, with my big mouth and crooked nose right before you?"

"Your nose isn't crooked, it's only irregular; and what if your mouth is large? That's only so much more sweetness. Besides, you know very well that I

didn't mean features when I said you were a perfect woman. I meant the *you*, the rich personality, the something that throbs in your music and shines out of your eyes and makes me the happiest man alive!"

"Dearest," she said, with an ecstatic little gesture expressive of the delight a woman feels when the greatness of a man's joy in her is acknowledged. Then, after a thoughtful moment, she looked up at him seriously, saying: "Father will be happy, too; he likes you so much."

"Yes, I think he does; but he will be very loth to resign you, even to me," and Hamilton thought of the Judge's singular devotion to his daughter. Perhaps it was the babble of the brook, so like the one they had fished together, that recalled to his mind the day in the woods when Judge Burton had revealed the existence of some trouble from which he longed to escape. It pained Hamilton to think of how that kindly face, so seared with inner struggles, would sadden when Marita left her home, and he resolved to be the tenderest, most devoted son a man could ask for. Some day he might know what the trouble was; and then how he would sympathize, how he would comfort the man who had comforted so many others!

"I wonder what you are thinking of?" asked Marita.

"Not you, for once, but your father."

Then, as they moved slowly along the bank, it occurred to him as a little odd that the father should have been uppermost in the minds of both. Why had neither one of them considered the mother? Was it because she was such a quiet little body that one was scarcely aware of her presence until reminded of it by some gentle word? Or was it because the Judge manifested his love for Marita with such intensity that her mother's less ardent love was overshadowed? Hamilton felt that in his own case it was because Marita had so many of her father's characteristics, so few of her mother's, and his thought naturally turned to the one who had been the strongest element in her life. As for Marita, he knew perfectly well that while she had the deepest affection for her mother, there was no such bond between them as that which held father and daughter. Indeed, it had not taken Hamilton long to discover that Mrs. Burton had little sympathy with and slight comprehension of Marita's intense nature, and it was equally plain that while Marita recognized her mother's fine qualities she also knew the limitations of her sweet disposition.

Such thoughts vaguely passed through Hamilton's mind, but were soon lost in the happiness of "talking it over" as they followed the stream, picking their way over stones and wet places, or sat in the shade thinking of nothing but each other. So the morning passed, and when they reached the Towers, just in time for luncheon, it was with the feeling that however great their future joys might be, they would seldom live through such unclouded hours again.

A driving party had been planned for the afternoon, and this, with music in the evening, prevented any further talk alone.

When they all gathered in the music room, Hamilton stood in the doorway and watched Marita take up her violin, feeling that she would play as she never had played before. She was dressed all in white tonight, her only ornament a star of pearls. The soft, silken crêpe, exquisitely made, clung to her graceful figure, and when she raised her arm and rested her chin on the Cremona she made a picture every man in the room admired, and most of the women envied. Slowly the notes rose, as if summoned from a spirit reluctantly giving up its treasures, then gradually they melted into passionate strains voicing the very life of

that spirit now abandoning itself to the joy of expression. Hamilton was right; Marita had never played like this before. He knew that every tone was a call from her heart to his, and he longed to answer, longed to cry out, "Yes, love, I hear you, and am with you always"; but he only folded his arms across his breast, though the tightness of the folding made them ache.

Marita laid down her violin amid a storm of the noisy applause she hated. Her eyes sought Hamilton's over the heads between them; he gave a nod that said, "I understood," and she replied with a smile which meant, "That is all I care for."

A little group gathered around Marita, and as Hamilton crossed the room to join it Mr. Chester was saying:

"Miss Burton, you belong to the only aristocracy worth considering—the aristocracy of genius."

"Hark!" said Marita with the comic air of solemnity she could assume so well. "Methinks I can hear your long line of ancestors stirring in their graves."

"Some of them the biggest rascals that ever lived! No; I take no stock in an aristocracy founded on mere pedigree. I'd rather have one distinguished forefather than a dozen of the ordinary kind; and I'd rather have

one spark of genius in Lawrence Chester than any number of famous ancestors."

"Your creed, then, is that of individual worth," Hamilton remarked.

"Most decidedly. It is the only true standard in a world of shams."

"I agree with you," replied Hamilton, admiring Chester more than ever.

"Yet you have family connections to be most proud of," said Mr. Norton reflectively.

"Very true," Hamilton answered; "but to me the character of Alexander Hamilton is of greater importance than the fact that he was the twenty-seventh in a line which numbers many earls and dukes."

"That's it exactly," Chester exclaimed. "The character of a man like Alexander Hamilton is a grand inheritance far excelling the value of landed titles; though even that is subordinate to the force that makes Grant Hamilton's name a power in the courts."

"No depreciation of Mr. Hamilton's ability," said Mr. Norton, with a courteous bend of his head, "but is not this very force inherited?"

"Why, my dear fellow," returned Lawrence Ches-

ter, "that's one advantage in having an illustrious ancestor, he's apt to transmit some of his greatness to you. But I tell you, no amount of transmitted greatness ever becomes a power unless it is utilized by the inheritor."

"Developed through freedom of the will," suggested Marita.

"Precisely," Chester said; and then a gentleman began to sing.

Later in the evening, when all the guests were promenading on the great veranda, Hamilton and Marita found a quiet corner where they were undisturbed for a few minutes.

"I shall not see you in the morning," he said, touching her hair with his lips. "I must leave on the early train."

"If we were at home I should see you off; here it would be too conspicuous."

"I fear it would, dear; but I'll give you a chance to see me off next week. I may come to Lindenhurst Saturday, may I not?"

"Oh, will you come?" she entreated with a joyful tremor in her voice. "I wish you would; I want you so——"

"Do you, love?" and he drew her close to his heart, holding her there till untimely footsteps approached. Then he released her, saying in a passionate whisper:

"Until Saturday."

CHAPTER VIII

"I DUNNO what's come over the Judge, Miss Marita," said Sam, who was a long tried servant privileged to speak out as faithful retainers often are. He was driving Marita home from the depot, and took this opportunity of expressing his anxiety concerning the Judge. Sam worshipped his master, and never wearied of telling how he was lying in a drunken sleep by the road when the Judge came riding along, and, seeing him there, aroused him. "You jus' ought to seen his eyes blaze," Sam would say. "He set me up 'gainst a fence, an' then he let fly at me. 'Look here,' says he, 'I dunno who you be, but you ain't got no right to go treatin' your body 's if 'twas a barrel. A man's got brains, an' they ain't like dried apples—soakin' don't improve 'em. Come now, why d'you clog your thinkin' machine with drink till you ain't no better'n the animals, nor as good as some of 'em.' I tell you what, no temp'rance talk I ever heard straightened me out like that did. I braced up, an' I says to him, 'I do it 'cause I'm a fool.' 'Well,

you're honest,' he says. 'Got a job?' I shook my head. 'No job an' no home.' Then he looked at me kind of sorry like, an' he says, 'I need a man, an' I'll try you till you do this again,' 'It's a go, boss,' I says, an' it's been a go ever since. You see it's a mighty good place—the Judge always treats you square —an' I've never yet been willin' he should think some animals better'n I am."

All this happened long ago, when Marita was a little girl in short frocks, and Sam was now the trusted manager of the farm. His evident anxiety troubled her.

"You think something is wrong with my father?" she asked uneasily.

"Looks that way."

"Why, how does he act—what has happened?"

"Fur one thing, he comes home every day lately with Salem in an awful sweat—'n you know, Miss Marita, that ain't like the Judge."

"It certainly is not. What else have you noticed?"

"Well, he went fishin' on Sunday—somethin' that ain't happened since I been at Lindenhurst."

"That's very odd."

"An' the oddest part is he come back without any fish."

"No fish?"

"No fish. Nuther thing that ain't happened since I been at Lindenhurst. My 'pinion is that the Judge never sunk a worm that day. His line was as dry as a chip when I put it away."

"Anything else?" said Marita with some misgivings.

"Well, Miss Marita, last night—Monday—I was comin' home from town late—must 'a' been midnight, or mebbe after. As I druv up the hill I seen a man leanin' on the stone wall 'longside that there peach orchard we jus' passed. I kind of halted, thinkin' if he needed help, he could call out; but he kep' still, so I come along home. When I got up to the house, there was Mis Burton on the steps, all dressed an' lookin' peeked like. 'Sam,' says she, 'have you seen the Judge?' 'Seen a man down by the peach orchard,' I says, 'but I couldn't make out his face in the dark.' I never seen Mis Burton look so troubled, an' she says, 'He went for a walk after dinner, an' he aint' come home yet.' 'He'll be along pretty soon,' says I, 'he's only thinkin' out a case down there in the quiet.' Then I druv 'long out to the barn an' put up the horse; but I felt uneasy like, an' I knew Mis Burton did, so

I went out to the gate to take a look down the road, hopin' I'd see him a-comin'. An' sure 'nough, he was comin'—an' what d'you s'pose? Mis Burton was walkin' with him! I seen her white dress close to him, like as if he had his arm 'round her. 'He's all right now,' I says, an' then I turned in fur the night."

"I am glad you told me about this, Sam," said Marita.

"You know how much I think o' the Judge, an' if anythin' goes wrong with him, I can't help seein' it. I thought you oughter know 'bout it, 'cause if anybody c'n smooth things out fur him, you can, Miss Marita."

"Perhaps things aren't as bad as you think—there he is waiting for me!"

Marita waved her hand at the Judge, who stood at the gate ready to lift her out. He greeted her as though she had been absent four months instead of four days.

"Did you have a good time, dear?" he asked, as they walked up the box-bordered path to the house.

"Oh, yes!" Marita answered.

"Many there?"

"Quite a house full—even for Chester Towers."

"Hamilton show up as he expected to?"

"Yes, he was there," Marita replied; by this time they had reached the steps, and she ran up on the veranda to meet her mother.

All through dinner Marita kept up a lively talk, and at times she thought the cloud on her father's face lifted; but there was an unmistakable cloud—a drawn look about the eyes and mouth that told of mental distress. When they rose from the table, Marita slipped her arm in her father's, saying:

"Now come and 'pace.'"

"Pacing" meant promenading the veranda from end to end, a habit of theirs ever since Marita was tall enough to walk with the Judge arm in arm. Though this was one of his favorite pastimes, he soon ended their pacing to-night by sending her upstairs to unpack her violin.

"I'm hungry for some music," said the Judge, a pathetic note sounding in his voice. Marita's eyes would have filled had she been a woman given to tears.

Marita came down with her Cremona in just the right mood to open the floodgates of her heart, and she did. Her music bore the message of her love, and in

the glorious melody Judge Burton read his doom—and hers.

"It has come," he thought. "She loves Hamilton—and I know that he loves her."

Suddenly Marita stopped playing; for the first time in her life she let her violin fall. With a half sob she went straight to her father's arms.

"My little girl—is it so?"

"Yes," she whispered, nestling close to the breast which had always been a never-failing shelter.

"Hamilton?"

She only clasped his neck tighter, speaking no word, but he knew.

That night while Marita slept, a happy smile parting her lips, in the room across the hall her father, with aching eyes, watched the black hours through until dawn.

CHAPTER IX

"NOW, Hamilton," said the Judge, closing the library door behind them.

It was Sunday afternoon, and the house was very quiet. Hamilton stood in front of the window opening on the balcony where he had passed so many hours with Marita—where they had watched the thunderstorm together, and she had spoken so comprehensively of Alexander Hamilton.

The Judge sat down in a leather armchair by the big table, and resting his elbow on the books and magazines, he raised a face bearing the look of a man who has braced himself for an ordeal. Hamilton did not wonder at this; he knew that when the Judge gave Marita, he gave the dearest thing in his life.

For a moment they looked at each other in silence. A cricket lazily droned in the garden, and outside the windows the wistaria rustled in the breeze. Hamilton found the stillness growing oppressive, and thinking it best not to delay, he spoke right to the point.

"I suppose you know, Judge Burton, why I requested this interview. You must have seen that I love your daughter, and I ask you to give her to me in marriage."

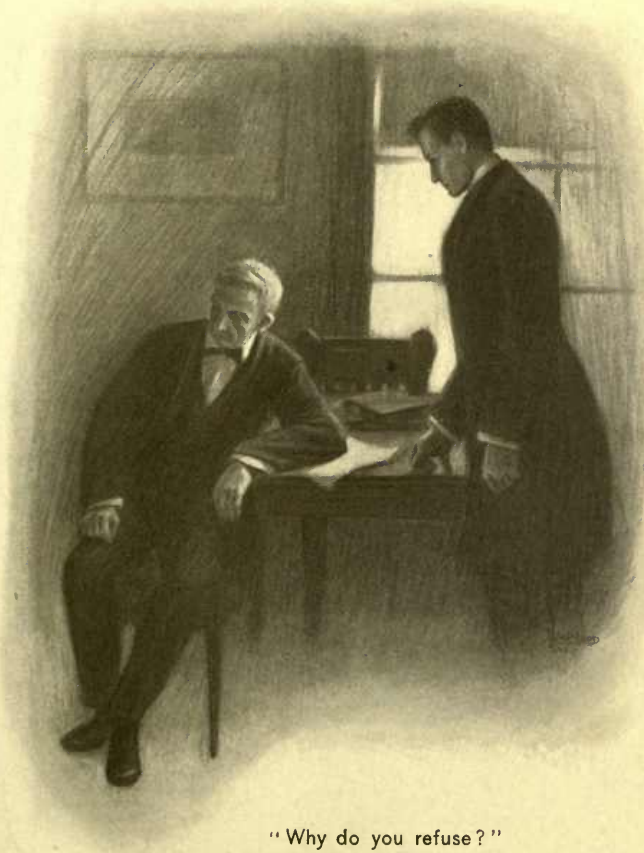
"Hamilton," said the Judge, after a pause which seemed inexcusably long to Grant, "I know you are not one of those men who regard a woman as a horse—a creature to be groomed and paced according to the whim of the master."

The spark in Hamilton's eyes said: "If you did think so, the devil would be to pay."

"And you say you love Marita," the Judge continued. "Does that mean that she stirs your pulse, that you enjoy her companionship, that you think she would grace your home and be a credit to you in society? Or does it mean that she is a part of yourself, that every shadow in her life would be a pain in yours, that, if she must suffer, you would willingly suffer with her?"

"It means, Judge Burton, that I hold no privilege dearer than the right to suffer *with* Marita, and no privilege greater than the right to suffer *for* her."

"Bravely said, Hamilton."



"Why do you refuse?"
demanded Hamilton.

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"*Truly* said," he replied in an earnest tone.

"I believe you," said the Judge sadly, "and I am sorry for you."

"Sorry for me?" Hamilton interrupted.

"Yes," with a sigh. "Sorry that you must suffer as you will, if you love her like that; sorry you must know that I refuse to give you my daughter."

Every vestige of color left Hamilton's face.

"You refuse?"

"I do," said the Judge, his heart aching with pity for the wound he had inflicted. "And I must tell you why. My refusal pains you, Hamilton, but the cause of it will be to you something of the agony it has been to me," the Judge paused as if gathering strength to go on.

"Why do you refuse?" demanded Hamilton, every fibre in his body strained with suspense.

The Judge answered slowly and distinctly. He had reached the point of torture where calmness comes from the very inability to suffer more.

"I refuse because the woman you love is not Marita Burton. She is only *Marita*."

Hamilton was stunned.

"You mean—" he said hoarsely.

"That she is *my* daughter, but not Mrs. Burton's."

Hamilton said nothing; for once his strong limbs refused to support him, and he sank into a chair. His brain was in a whirl; he could not think clearly. He, to whom birthright meant so much, could not adjust himself to the thought of Marita with no birthright, Marita with no name. That proud-spirited woman branded with the curse of illegitimacy? Oh, God! it was too awful—too cruel! He was shaken to the very soul, every fibre ached with the strain; after a sharp struggle gradually the confusion of the shock subsided, and out of the chaos into which his mind had been thrown there rose the clearest mental perception Hamilton had ever known. For one brief instant it seemed to him that all the conventions of life fell from the human soul, and he saw it in its relation to the universe—bare of every attribute save its own power for good or ill. Such a God-given thing could rise above the circumstances of birth by the right of its merit! There was—there *must* be in Marita the power to do this. Then, with this thought still uppermost, the human phase rushed over him again—all the anguish and humiliation. Oh, how the pity and tenderness surged up in his heart; how he longed to

draw her into his life that he might strengthen her and soften the bitterness with his love.

He was about to speak when the Judge, who had been watching Hamilton's face, raised his hand, saying:

"Wait! Let me tell you all about it. Of course you understand that Marita knows nothing of this. It has been the care of my life to keep it from her."

Naturally Hamilton's first thought had been for Marita; but these words brought a realization of the suffering this man had endured. Now he understood the lines in the Judge's face—his singular devotion to Marita—his great longing "to get away from it all." Thinking of how his life had been embittered, of how many times his heart had been wrenched by an unconscious word, of how an ever-present sting poisoned the father's joy in the daughter, he was filled with sympathy and compassion.

"When I was young, Hamilton, I was a hot-blooded man, guilty of some indiscretions. I spent two months in Rome one winter, and during that time I lived with Mondello, a talented old musician who had one daughter. The girl was young and very beautiful. She had no mother, and her father was too much engrossed with

his music to look after his daughter's welfare. It was the old story of woman's frailty and man's selfish passion. I was happy with Anita Mondello, for she was not only amorous, but companionable, a girl who, if she had been educated, would have made a superior woman.

"I left Italy in the spring, and on the steamer coming home I met Mrs. Burton. She was so different from the other girl—I suppose her greatest attraction for me lay in that difference. Before we reached American shores we were engaged, and not long after I won her father's consent. We were married in the fall, and the following April we went abroad for a year or more. My wife had never been in Italy, and, of course, was anxious to visit Rome. Before we went there I firmly resolved not to go near the old street where I had lived before; but on one of those spring days, when the blood flows like lava in a man's veins, the temptation grew too strong, and I turned into that street. I don't like to think of what would have happened if I had found things as I left them!

"When I approached the house, I saw Anita's father coming out of the door. As soon as he recog-

nized me his face grew black—and no wonder! Well, I was not long in learning that I was the father of a baby girl—and—Anita was dead. Mondello went back with me, and as we entered the living room I saw my child, lying on the floor on a blanket, kicking her heels in the sunlight. I bent over her, and she laid perfectly quiet gazing at the stranger. Then a smile broke over the tiny face, and her little hand closed over one of my fingers. Ah, Hamilton, the magic of that touch! It bound me to her from that instant—it was the dividing-point between a carefree and a care-worn life.

"I confessed everything to my wife, and she agreed with me that the only right thing to do was to take the child and bring it up as our own. You may, perhaps, understand the reverence I have for the woman who not only forgave my sin, but so nobly took up the burden of it with me.

"We remained in Italy several years, and before we left I buried Anita's father beside her, vowing to spend my life in righting, so far as I could, the wrong I had done them. Now, Hamilton, I have told you everything. You know what Marita's life has been. You know how she has been loved, sheltered, and

educated; but you don't know—you never can know—what these years have been to me! To see a daughter develop as she has developed, to see the lovely girl grow into the glorious woman, to watch this day by day, knowing that every added grace hastened her doom—for love is the doom of such as she—ah! I wonder that I'm a sane man!"

The Judge was silent a moment, and then continued:

"I have seen this coming, but I was powerless to prevent it. Any opposition would have merely hastened matters. It was inevitable, and though I grieve for you, Hamilton, I thank God that her love has been given to a man so noble. You will suffer—but as you said, you will suffer *for* her—and you will find a way to slip out of her life without hurting her more than is necessary."

Hamilton sat silent, weighing everything. In the few minutes that passed before he spoke, his own fate had been decided—and Marita's. At last he rose and stood before the older man, feeling that he was in the presence of incarnate remorse.

"Judge Burton, you tell me that now I know everything. First, let me tell you that I am proud to know such a man! You have my deepest respect and

sympathy, but you are mistaken in one thing. I shall not slip out of Marita's life. Once more I ask you to give me your daughter in marriage."

"What!" exclaimed the Judge, rising out of his chair. "You—a Hamilton—would marry a nameless woman!"

"Yes, I would," said Hamilton with a proud lift of the head. As he continued speaking, the Judge walked up and down in his agitation, clasping and unclasping his hands behind him. "Am I not right in supposing that you, Mrs. Burton and myself are the only persons living who are aware of Marita's parentage?"

"Yes, yes," said the Judge, knitting his brows.

"Well, then, why should she not become my wife? It is unlikely that any one of us will enlighten her, and to the world she will be as she always has been."

"Hamilton," answered the Judge, pausing in his walk, "I have not doubt but that, so far as you and Marita are concerned, it would be a happy solution of a difficult problem, since you are willing to waive your family pride; but this is a deep question which must be considered from all points. Can you deliberately take such a step, under such circumstances, when you

think of the account you must some day render to your children?"

The Judge asked this question almost as if putting it to a prisoner at the bar, and Hamilton answered as if he were pleading for his life.

"I have thought of that, and I have based the whole future on the ground of individual worth. It is the foundation of my own family. Our pride is in the noble character of Alexander Hamilton rather than in his long lineage. As you know, his parentage is uncertain; but that fact does not reflect with discredit upon him nor his descendents. Why? Because all things are secondary in the face of such nobility!

"Therefore, I say that a woman who has the inherent power to overcome evil and promote good; a woman who has exercised that power successfully in the past; a woman who, by the very laws of her being, must continue to exercise that power in the future, is a woman who will bequeath to her children a wealth of character far better than a family tree. I believe in Marita. I believe that if she remains ignorant of her birth, she will be a noble wife and mother; I believe that if she should in some way discover her illegitimacy, she will prove herself worthy of honor by

the power with which she will rise above her misfortune. My love for Marita lies too deep for words. I cannot tell you how great it is; but I *can* tell you that if you give her to me you will never regret it—and that, from me to you, means much. I will not promise to shield her from trials; that is idle. We both know that trials come to every soul worthy to struggle with them. I *will* promise to help her bear those trials, to do all I can to strengthen her."

"Hamilton," the Judge interrupted, "it's no wonder you win your cases. Your words have great weight, and they're the words of one of God's noblemen. You are worthy of trust, I know, but if I consent to this marriage there is one condition I must impose."

"And that is?"

"Don't tell her, Hamilton, don't tell her!"

"I shall never tell her, Judge Burton. That is your right."

"Yes, it *is* my right as long as I live; and remember, it has been the care of my life that she should not know."

"It shall be the care of my life, too!" said Hamilton, holding out his hand to the Judge. Neither man

ever forgot that handclasp. It was to them the seal of a compact.

"Hamilton, I believe in your love for Marita, and I think it is a love that will deepen with time; but a husband must have something more than infinite love—he must have infinite patience, as the wife must also. Will you have the patience to bear with my little girl, to spare her the small wounds that often hurt so cruelly, to think always of the tragedy underlying her life?"

"How can I forget it? Will it not be a tragedy in my life, also? Be assured that you yourself could not deal with her more gently, more lovingly than I will. Our marriage would mean that not you alone, but you and I together, would live for her and do all we could to perfect her life, making it——"

A light tap sounded on the door, and Marita's voice came to them, saying:

"Are you two going to talk all day?"

Hamilton looked at the Judge, wondering what he would do. He hesitated an instant, and then, in an unsteady voice, he said:

"Come in."

Marita opened the door and stood just within the

room, looking from one to the other. She knew it would be a hard talk for her father, but she was not prepared for the look she saw in his face.

"Marita," he said, and it seemed to Hamilton that all the pent-up agony in the father's life echoed in that one word. He was not ashamed of the moisture gathering in his eyes as he turned them away from the gray hair touching the brown.

When the Judge lifted his head, he looked at Hamilton as if charging him to remember. Then he said brokenly:

"Now, Marita, go to your husband."

CHAPTER X

"MARITA," said Mrs. Burton, looking up from her hem-stitching, "do you think your father seems quite well?"

Mrs. Burton sat in her favorite low chair in the library, finishing a cobweb-like handkerchief for Marita's trousseau. That young lady, who would never have possessed a hand-made handkerchief if she had been obliged to make it herself, was perched upon the arm of a big chair, twirling a felt walking hat in her hand. She had just come in from a long walk in the October sunshine. A wayward breeze had reduced her hair to a charming state of disorder, while every look and move expressed her magnificent vitality now heightened by the crisp autumn air.

Mrs. Burton thought she had never seen Marita looking so well. Surely happiness was doing much for the girl. It had graced her personality with a charm, delicate as the bloom on a peach and like it, softening and enhancing other beauties.

When the Judge had told his wife of Hamil-

ton's decision she had expressed the strongest disapproval.

"Marita ought never to marry," she said; and though the Judge repeated all of Hamilton's arguments, he could not convince her that the marriage should occur. However, since her husband had consented, she regarded the matter as settled, and immediately began to busy her fingers with dainty finery for Marita. During the September days she had stitched and pondered. Often her work would fall in her lap, and she would look down into the valley or up at the mountains, as if seeking to find there the answer to the queries that constantly rose in her mind. What did the future hold for Marita? Would the time come when Hamilton would regret his decision? Did she possess enough of her father's self-control to restrain the passionate nature inherited from her Italian mother? These questions troubled Mrs. Burton until she was nervously weary of the whole matter and thankful when Saturday came and Hamilton, by his strong presence, seemed to straighten everything out. She had grown to be very fond of him. "He is noble," she often said to herself. Perhaps, way down in her heart, she thought he was too noble for Marita. There

were certain phases of the girl's character which Mrs. Burton did not and could not understand. They were the very phases that she dreaded because, being so foreign to her cool Puritan blood, she could not comprehend them, and the unknown evil is always feared the most.

This morning, however, it was the Judge for whom she was concerned, and the question she asked of Marita was accompanied by a very anxious look.

"No, mother, I don't," said Marita, her bright face clouding a little as she thought of how unlike himself the Judge looked as he rode away that morning. "Father hasn't seemed quite natural since I came back from Tuxedo; I have thought it was on account of this the Judge had looked as he rode away that morning. two, though, he has looked almost ill; don't you think so?"

"I do," said Mrs. Burton. "I am very much worried about him. His eyes were so dull this morning and his hands were like flatirons."

"He needs a vacation," returned Marita. "If he could get away I think it would be fine for us to take a little trip this fall, say up to Canada, or perhaps a little later, down to New Orleans"

"It would be pleasant; but how about Grant?"

"Oh, he would go with us; I'm sure he would."

"And if he couldn't?"

"Well, you and father could take the trip any way. I could easily find some one to chaperone me here, or could make Mrs. Chester the promised visit in New York."

"That would suit you to perfection, wouldn't it?"

"I fear it would," said Marita with a conscious flush.

"You are very happy, dear?"

"Oh, mother, *so* happy! I can't begin to tell you! I'm almost afraid of my happiness. It seems too ideal to last."

Mrs. Burton replied with gentle seriousness.

"Try to deserve your happiness and it will last."

"Does that always follow?" Marita asked thoughtfully.

Mrs. Burton threaded her needle before she said:

"I fear that's too deep a question for me to answer."

"I'll ask Grant," affirmed Marita, as if he were unquestionable authority. "He deserves happiness if any one does. He is so good——"

"And so good to you."

"Ah, yes! No one knows," said Marita, a soft light

shining in her eyes as she gazed out at the brilliant autumn foliage. Strange that the crimson heights of the maples, the yellow slenderness of the birches, the brown fullness of the elms, even the depths of the evergreens, should all enshrine the same manly face.

"You trust him, too, don't you, Marita?"

"Absolutely! I cannot conceive of a love not founded on trust."

"Nor can I. No woman can find happiness with a man whom she does not trust." After stitching in silence a few moments, Mrs. Burton continued: "There is one thing I have wondered about, Marita. What are you going to do with all the leisure that will come to you when you are married and living in New York? You cannot spend whole days on horseback there, nor mornings in the woods, nor afternoons on the river."

"I know it; and the shopping is always intolerable, as are most of the social functions; but, mother dear, you forget my music. I hope to do great things with that; perhaps to study some, if Grant approves."

"He surely could have no objection," said Mrs. Burton, smiling at Marita's willingness to be guided by his judgment. It seemed a little odd to see the girl who

had always been so headstrong transformed into such an amenable creature.

"The power of love is incalculable," she thought. "Perhaps everything will come out all right after all," and she held up the handkerchief to study the effect of the monogram in the hem-stitched corner. "Marita, would you like to have lace on the edge of this; or do you think it would be prettier without?"

Marita did not answer. She was looking out of the window, and presently when she did speak, it was in a startled tone.

"Mother, Doctor Earle is driving up the hill—and, I think, father is in the carriage with him."

"That can't be," said Mrs. Burton, hastily laying down her work and looking out over Marita's shoulder. With anxious eyes she saw that it was the Judge; he was leaning back, his relaxed form supported by the Doctor's arm.

"Marita," she cried, "he is ill."

And he was.

CHAPTER XI

"OH, Grant, you are such a comfort!"

Hamilton had just closed the front door behind them, and Marita, seeing that there was no one in the hall, impulsively clasped her arms around his neck as she spoke.

"You needed the fresh air, dear. That is why I insisted upon your leaving the sick room long enough to take a walk."

"No one else would have known exactly what I needed. Not even my blessed father understands me as you do."

Hamilton did not reply in words, yet she was satisfied with his answer.

"I must go back to him now," said Marita, reluctantly drawing herself away. "I hope father hasn't missed me."

"You will be a better nurse for your outing," Hamilton assured her. "Let me know soon how you find him, and if you need me——"

"I shall call you," she said, hurrying up the stairs.

After she had disappeared Hamilton paced up and down the hall. He was too restless to remain quiet, and if he was wanted they would find him immediately.

Since Thursday night, when he received Marita's telegram telling of her father's illness, Hamilton had been filled with a foreboding greater than he would acknowledge. He had taken the first train on Friday morning, and found the Judge a desperately sick man. The Doctor pronounced it a case of extreme nervous exhaustion, and Hamilton shuddered as he thought of all the man had endured. It was no wonder he was prostrated. Such a grief as his slowly weakens the vital powers, and now that a complete collapse had come, Hamilton felt very doubtful of the Judge's recovery. Supposing he was not restored to health? Then the secret of Marita's birth would rest with Mrs. Burton and himself. He knew that she would never have the courage to tell Marita. If it should ever become necesary for her to know the truth, he would be the one to disclose it. Sometimes he felt that it would be better for her to know, that it was her right to know. Was it fair for him to marry her when she did not know? Would it not be wiser to tell her everything? He had even urged this upon the Judge, but

the father objected so strongly that Hamilton could only abide by his wishes, and would respect them in case of his death; yet the time might come when she ought to know, when it would be a crime to keep her in ignorance of her birth. Then he would have to tell her, and Hamilton knew she would blame him for not having told her before. He could almost see the grieved look in her eyes as she reproached him. A great longing to make a clean breast of it all and have nothing between them, swept over him now, as it often had before. He was not afraid of the refusal to marry him which he knew would come. She was proud, but she was also broad-minded, and he was sure of his power to level the barriers she would raise, by showing her that they were false ones. Still, think as he might, what could he do? To take matters into his own hands would be to break faith with the Judge, and Grant Hamilton was incapable of doing that. So, like the lost man who travels in a circle, he came back to the same point he started from, keenly feeling his helplessness.

Stopping in his walk, he looked out of the window, wondering if he had ever seen the sky such a leaden gray. The wind had almost bared the trees, drift-

ing the leaves in heaps along the garden paths. Frost had browned the last few chrysanthemums still holding their heads above the other withered flowers, waiting for the snow to hide their shrivelled forms. It was a dreary outlook, and Hamilton was glad to turn his attention to the crackling fire in the library. He stood in the doorway watching its cheery blaze, when Mrs. Burton came down the stairs.

"How is he now?" asked Hamilton, knowing from her face that there was no improvement.

"There has been a change," she answered, "and, oh, Grant, I am so afraid!"

"You think——"

"No—no, I don't fear the end—only—he's lost his grip on himself, and I tremble every time he speaks."

"I see. You fear he will say something before Marita that will arouse her suspicions, if not reveal the whole truth."

"Exactly. You see, she has been the only one he's recognized, and in all his delirium he's never referred to her, seeming to realize the necessity of silence on that subject; but while Marita was out walking with you I noticed a difference. He hasn't betrayed anything yet, though he's been talking of Italy and the old days.

While he is sleeping I'm going to dine; then I can send Marita down to eat with you, and we must keep her away from her father as much as we possibly can. It would be horrible to have her learn the truth like that!"

"Indeed it would. I'll do the best I can to keep her down here."

"You can keep her if any one can," said Mrs. Burton with a wan smile.

Hamilton held out his hand to the brave little woman he admired so much.

"Your goodness to Marita is divine," he said in a broken voice.

She made no reply, tears filling her eyes as she withdrew her hand from his clasp and passed on into the dining-room.

A maid came to light the lamps in the library, and Hamilton sat down with a book, which he didn't read. He looked into the fire, marvelling at the heroic fibre that is woven into the frail bodies of some women.

After dining, Mrs. Burton made definite arrangements with Hamilton for the night, and then went upstairs to resume her duties there. When Marita came down to him, Hamilton was really worried, she looked

so pale and worn. All through dinner he devoted himself to leading her thoughts away from the Judge.

"We'll have coffee in the library," Hamilton said to the maid as he rose and went around the table to Marita. "Come, dear; you're a weary girl to-night, and I want you to obey me and let me take care of you."

With her great brown eyes resting lovingly on Hamilton, Marita shook her head.

"You must remember that I have some one to care for."

"And you must remember that your first duty is to care for yourself so you'll be able to care for your father. Be reasonable, dear heart, and rest; you've only slept a few hours since he was taken ill."

"I cannot rest, and I can't bear to have father ask for me when I'm not there."

"You *can* rest, and I promise you that if your father asks for you, I will call you. I intend to take care of him myself to-night."

"Oh, my dear, I can't let you do that!"

"You have nothing to say about it. Your mother and I settled the matter before dinner; she will watch until ten o'clock, then I go on duty till morning."

"What a tyrant you are!" she said, looking as if she liked such tyranny.

"Put yourself in my hands and learn how gentle a tyrant can be," urged Hamilton.

"You always do have your own way," said Marita, rising and slipping her arm through his as they left the dining-room.

"I wouldn't be a Hamilton if I didn't," he returned, closing his hand over hers.

"Do you know, I discovered something long ago."

"What did you discover?"

"That your way is pretty sure to be the best way there is."

He turned and looked into her eyes. Then there was a sweet, silent moment.

When the coffee tray had been carried out, Hamilton persuaded Marita to lie down on the sofa, since he could not induce her to leave him until ten. He covered her with a warm slumber robe, and drawing up a chair, sat down beside her to read aloud. The rise and fall of his voice acted as a lullaby. It was not long before her eyelids drooped and sleep conquered. Grant drew the cover closer around her shoulders, and turning out the lights, remained by her

side for over an hour. Many precious thoughts mingled with the troubled ones. Occasionally a flame leaping high out of the open fire would reveal every line of Marita's face. During the days that followed Hamilton often saw her again as he saw her that night, pale and sweet in her unconsciousness, the brown hair lying in soft waves against the crimson silk of the pillow, the well-marked eyebrows tapering into the temples and arching over the closed eyes, under which dark circles had been traced by the care and anxiety of the past few days.

At ten o'clock Hamilton left her still sleeping soundly. He went up to the sick-room, where Mrs. Burton gave him directions for the night. They agreed that it would be best to leave Marita undisturbed; if she was aroused and sent to bed she might not go to sleep again.

After arranging everything needful Mrs. Burton left Hamilton, telling him to touch the bell button twice if she was wanted. Now he watched the father as he had just watched the daughter. The Judge was very restless, turning often and sometimes opening his eyes; he had not recognized Hamilton at any time, and did not appear to know whose hand admin-

istered that draught that quieted him for an hour or more.

Hamilton was beginning to grow sleepy himself. There was nothing to do for the sick man, and it was so still; only the ticking of a clock broke the silence. He rose from his chair, thinking he could shake off his drowsiness if he took a turn across the room. As he was about to leave the bedside, the Judge suddenly opened his eyes, looking full at him with a half-intelligent gaze. At the same instant Hamilton heard a light step—and Marita stood beside him. The Judge looked at them a moment, and then said slowly, distinctly, and with strong emphasis:

"Don't tell her, Hamilton, don't tell her. She'll never marry you if you do."

Hamilton's heart stood still. His eyes were fairly glued to the lips that had uttered those terrible words.

The Judge stirred uneasily, and his mouth twitched as if he were trying to speak again. Never had Hamilton longed for anything as he longed for him to tell the whole wretched secret. The agonizing minutes passed; no words came, only a few unintelligible mutterings.

Marita stood motionless, watching her father as he

gradually sank into a deep sleep. Then slowly, as if every move was an effort, she went to the head of the bed and touched the bell button twice.

Without once looking at Hamilton she passed through the door, saying:

"Come."

The metallic tone of her voice rang like a knell in Hamilton's ears. He knew that Fate had thrown down the gauntlet with a cruel challenge.

CHAPTER XII

HAMILTON had never been near drowning, though he had once heard an old sea captain corroborate the statement that when a man feels the water closing over him, his life seems to pass before him in one great flash. As Hamilton followed Marita to the library, the future—the outcome of the Judge's speech—was as plain to him as the vision of the past to the drowning man. He knew what interpretation she would put upon those fatal words; he knew that he was powerless to clear himself without implicating the Judge, and that he would never do.

Marita went to the hearth and stirred the fire. She appeared to be half paralyzed; every move she made was mechanical. A burning log broke and dropped into the ashes. It seemed to break the spell that bound her so unnaturally, and with an impulsive turn towards Hamilton, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Grant, tell me everything! I must know it all—*all*—do you understand?"

Hamilton knew that his answer would seal his doom.

"Marita," he said, growing cold as he spoke, "I can tell you nothing."

For an instant she looked at him incredulously. Then a passion of indignation swept over Marita, blazing out of her eyes and burning in her words.

"You can tell me nothing! There is some secret in your life that you cannot, *will* not trust with me. A secret so terrible that if you told it I would never marry you; that is what my father said. How dare you win my love and my promise when you know your life holds something that would keep me from marrying you if I knew it? What *can* there be that I would not forgive? You know that my love is no girlish fancy. It is the love of a woman who would follow you to prison if need be; who would stand by you in any disgrace, loyal and true and ready to comfort through every kind of trouble; yet you deceive this love, you withhold from it the privilege of proving itself worthy of trust. You tell my father, and to me you are silent. Together you plot to keep this from me—this secret which it is my right to know. How could you treat me so; oh, how *could* you?"

Each word had been a stab to Hamilton, and now, as Marita uttered this cry of reproach, it seemed to

him that he should never find the strength to remain silent. He could not trust himself to speak, and turning away from her, leaned his forehead on the window pane, finding its cold hardness grateful.

Marita went over to him, laying her hand on his arm.

"Grant," she said beseechingly, "I thought our love was founded on trust. You said you had told me all of your follies as I told you mine. I could not be guilty of any wrong that I would not confide to you, trusting in your forgiveness, and believing that you would help me to atone. Why, there is no sin I could commit that I would not trust to your mercy. Don't you think my mercy can be trusted also? Anything is better than deception. Grant, speak to me—don't be afraid—my love will bear any test!"

"Oh," he groaned, drawing her to him as if he would never let her go, "if I *could* speak I should be almost happy! I cannot speak, Marita, I cannot speak!"

His words came like the cry of a forest creature trapped and powerless to move.

"You cannot speak?"

"No, no, I cannot; but you *must* believe in me—you *must* trust me. You said your love would bear

any test; now prove your words! I ask you to trust me in my silence, knowing that I would speak if I could, and believing that I would not ask this if I did not trust you as I would have you trust me."

Hamilton spoke with such power in look and tone that, if the Judge had only said, "Don't tell her," Marita would, perhaps, have forgiven Hamilton's persistent silence. Unfortunately, he had said more than that.

Slowly she drew herself away from Hamilton's arms and stood aloof, speaking with much dignity.

"Your secret may involve others, and your refusal to speak may be honorable; yet since that secret is of such importance that my father says I would never marry you if I knew it, I must refuse to trust you blindly, and without trust there can be no marriage."

Marita's voice was steady as she spoke the hardest words she had ever uttered, but the room swam, and she was thankful her groping hand found the back of the chair.

Though Hamilton had expected this, he started as if he had been struck.

"Don't, Marita, don't say that! You will not ruin our lives."

"Is it I who have wrought the ruin?" she asked sadly.

"No, poor child, it is not you."

Hamilton's heart swelled with pity as he thought of how she must suffer for her father's sin. The bitterness of it all overwhelmed him. Why should they endure so much through the wrong-doing of another? Did he not have a right to dispel this cloud, to put everything straight between them? He felt that the secret of her birth would be easier for her to bear than this distrust. The spirit of rebellion rose high within him. It was unjust that he, whose honor was stainless, should be so condemned. He would tell her. The words of his justification rose to his lips, but there they died. He shut his teeth hard. A Hamilton break his word? Ah, no! Far better that Marita should think his honor stained than that it should really be. He had promised the Judge never to tell her.

"That is my right as long as I live; and, remember, it has been the care of my life that she should not know."

Those were the Judge's words, uttered in this very room. However extenuating the present circum-

stances might seem, Hamilton knew that it would be cowardly to break his word. If he cleared himself he must sacrifice the Judge. Hamilton hated himself for even thinking that he would tell Marita; yet being very human, he resolved not to let her go out of his life until he had made one last effort to keep her.

"You are not responsible," he resumed, "though you will be, perhaps, the greatest sufferer. Think, dear; can you not trust me in spite of your father's words? I might tell you that they were the idle words of delirium. They are not, Marita. There is something known to your father and myself which you do not know. If I do not deny this, as I might very easily, will you not believe me when I say that I am sure you would marry me if you knew all there is to know?"

"I know that if I married you without knowing all, ugly doubt would poison every joy, would lurk in every corner, would overshadow our whole existence. Oh, why—why *don't* you tell me? Surely you know that actual trouble is easier to grapple with than mistrust."

Ah, yes, he knew that! Yet he could not change her burden. He could not even say anything that

would thrust the necessity of disclosure upon the Judge.

"Marita, you know I would willingly bear all your troubles if I could. Forget this awful nightmare! Don't let such a thing part us forever. It cannot—it *shall* not part us. You are mine; you belong to me; you were made for me. Every word you have uttered to-night has proved it over and over——"

"You were not made for me."

Could that be Marita's voice? Those cold, hard tones? They were maddening to Hamilton.

"I *was* made for you! In the sight of God I am worthy of you. I have told you that I could not speak. I have asked you to trust me. You refuse to do so. You say that there can be no marriage without trust, and I agree with you. If you cannot believe in me, then it is better that all should end."

"It is," said Marita, feeling as if she were screwing down the lid of her own coffin.

"Is that final?" Hamilton asked, his voice shaking with the wrath of a man unjustly accused.

"Yes," answered Marita, holding to her resolution with her father's spirit, though her mother's blood plead for love.

"You cannot mean it!" he cried, unable to believe that the blow had really fallen.

"I *do* mean it," she said decidedly.

"My God!" exclaimed Hamilton, striding up and down the room. "You don't know what you're doing! Think of our love, of all the sweetness and richness you take out of life. You are condemning yourself as well as me. What happiness, what joy do you expect to find in the future?"

"None, since my trust in you is gone."

"And what is to become of me?" he went on passionately. "I have woven all my thoughts and hopes about you. My whole future is destroyed. Marita, you cannot know how much you are to me. I have grown to look upon you as a part of myself."

"Yet I am beyond the pale of your confidence."

With all his anguish Hamilton had never been so proud of Marita as he was at that moment. For a woman to love as he knew she loved, and resist a lover as she had resisted, that was power—though the very power he reverenced made his pleading hopeless.

"Oh," he said despairingly, "it is useless!"

Marita looked at him gravely.

"You are only prolonging the torture."

Hamilton took a step towards her and grasped her arms.

"I'd almost rather crush the life out of you than leave you. Remember—it is your wish—since you wish it—I will go—I—" the words choked in his throat.

Marita dared not look at Hamilton. She heard him move towards the door; she wanted to cry out. The pain in her heart grew and grew until it seemed as if she could not bear the agony in silence.

Hamilton stopped with his hand on the door.

"Marita, promise to send for me if I can ever help you."

"I shall never need help from one whom I cannot trust."

Afterwards Marita wondered how she could have let him go with those cruel words; at the time she knew that she could not hold out much longer; she felt that she must say something to end it all. She said the right thing, for the door closed.

Marita was alone.

. . . . . .

When the maid knocked at Hamilton's door in the morning, he was gone.

Later that day the Judge asked for music. Marita

went to the library to get her violin. She found it on the piano, uncased, and resting upon a sheet of music—Mendelssohn's "Consolation."

Through the night she had lain with wide-open eyes, staring into the darkness; no tears came to relieve the tenseness of her suffering; but this last good-by of his —this loving thought of her pain and the surest way to ease it—this was too much. It was so like him—he was always thinking of others. She pictured him coming into that room in the dreary dawn and leaving this reminder of his watchful love. It must have been so lonely to go away like that, and she missed him so much—and wanted him. The tears came with a rush, and bending over the violin, Marita sobbed as she had never sobbed in all her life.

CHAPTER XIII

TO get away from Lindenhurst was the essential thing for Hamilton. Walking down to the village, taking the first train for Jersey City, and boarding a ferry-boat for New York, were automatic actions carrying out his aim. He felt as if he himself were far away while his body went on performing the necessary motions.

As he walked up Chambers Street, the silence of the grim warehouses and the absence of trucks impressed him as something strange. He stopped and looked about, yet he didn't realize that it was Sunday morning until he heard a boy calling, "Sun-day 'Journ-al.'" Hamilton went on up to Broadway and stood a moment on the corner. He couldn't bear the thought of going home in his present state, and the club was still more impossible.

With hesitating steps he turned down Broadway, passing the great buildings all shrouded in a quietude so unusual to one accustomed to see them teeming with energetic life. Nothing seemed natural. Hamilton

missed the hurrying throng, the shouts of drivers and the clanging bells of the cars that ran so quietly to-day; he missed the curbstone sellers with their piles of bone collar buttons and bunches of shoe strings; even the street corners seemed desolate without the stands heaped with polished fruit.

On he went until the tall graceful spire of old Trinity towered above him like a great finger raised to the multitude as if some invisible power said, "Hark! Listen to the throb of life!" It had always seemed to Hamilton that the pulse of New York could be felt at this point, where Wall Street joins Broadway. He had chosen an office in this locality, partly because he liked to be near so vital a part of the city, and partly because from his windows he could look down upon the burying-ground of Trinity Church, where a solid gray stone marks the resting-place of Alexander Hamilton.

On this morning, though, the same unnaturalness pervaded even the familiar office building. No quick footsteps echoed in the marble corridors, no elevators were running. Even after Hamilton had climbed the stairs and unlocked his own rooms, everything still was strange. In the outer room, where his clerks and

stenographer worked, things were in painfully perfect order. The desks were closed, the waste-baskets were empty, the typewriter was carefully covered.

Hamilton threw open the door and entered his private office. The same leather chairs stood on the same rich Turkish rug; the same bookcases held the same law library of which he was justly proud; the same bronze clock ticked away the hours under the gaze of the same portraits of Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate, and Alexander Hamilton; the same desk awaited him with the same papers and letters, yet Hamilton knew that nothing was the same to him, and that nothing ever would be the same to him again. He knew that it was not the Sunday strangeness as much as it was the strangeness of his own heart. No soul can be deeply wounded without bearing a scar.

Sitting down before his desk, Hamilton leaned back in his chair and tried to collect himself. He had been so stunned by the occurrences at Lindenhurst that connected thought had been impossible. Making an effort to think clearly, he endeavored to unravel the tangled threads, though with all his twisting and turning he could not straighten them out. He considered the situation from every standpoint, but no view

showed any opening in the maze. Many life problems he had solved for others in that very room, but his own baffled him.

"Of course," thought Hamilton, "the Judge may recover, and if he learns the reason of my absence, may tell Marita everything; but even if she knows the truth, I doubt if she will let me know. What am I to do? Nothing! That's the worst of it—do nothing. By heavens!" bringing his clenched hand down on the desk with such force that the inkstand rattled. "I don't know of any greater hell! To plant a great strong passion in the heart of a man, to separate him from the woman he loves, to chain him so he must lie passive while he suffers, to add to his own torture the knowledge that he is powerless to help her—it's damnation!"

Hamilton sprang to his feet and paced the floor like a caged lion.

"If there were only something to fight, something to overcome. There's a certain satisfaction in battling, even if it is a hopeless struggle. It's fearful to be bound like this when you have the strength and will to dare anything. This wretched business is another proof of a truth I learned long ago, and that is, that the

Almighty doesn't allow us to choose our own burdens. All I have to say is, it will take all the grit I've got to bear the one he has selected for me. How can I live through the long days with no word, no sign, no sight of those glorious eyes, no touch of those lips. Think of it—I, whose every fibre thrills and throbs in her presence, to have nothing—nothing! To just wait, wait, wait, knowing that I may never have anything. It's enough to drive a man mad!"

Several hours passed into eternity while Hamilton struggled with whirling brain and aching heart; but his spirit was that of the conqueror, and in those hours he gained the greatest of all victories—the victory over self. When he rose from the battle, he was master. He saw that he must endure a separation, and he was prepared to bravely face the inevitable. There was little hope; yet that little he cherished, resolved to keep an untiring watch for opportunity, and if it ever came, to seize it with all the force of his being and carry everything before him.

When Hamilton locked the office door behind him, his face wore a look that some of his clients had seen. It was the look that came when he had lost a case, and had determined to carry it into the Supreme Court.

He walked slowly through the empty hall, down the stairs, and out through the wide entrance. Crossing Broadway and entering Rector Street, a few steps brought him before the grave of Alexander Hamilton. Only an iron paling separated him from the monument standing so near the sidewalk.

"It is well," thought Hamilton, "that he, who lived for the people should rest in a place like this, where many footfalls echo above his ashes. They are a fitting and never-dying requiem for one whose national influence was so vital. I wish he were alive—I'd like to grasp his hand. He would understand how hard this waiting is, he would have chafed, as I do, under such forced inactivity; but there's no comfort in that stone," and turning away with a chill in his heart, he went on to the Elevated station.

On the way uptown Hamilton tried to think how he was going to adjust himself to the routine of daily life —minus hope of Marita. He had not realized until now how the thought of her had woven itself into everything. Of one thing he was thankful, there would be no breaking the news to his friends, because he had told no one of his engagement—not even his mother. He had talked it over with Marita, and they had pre-

ferred not to make an announcement until the wedding was near; at least he was spared the painful task of telling any one that his happy hopes were gone.

Perhaps if Hamilton's mother had been to him what some mothers are, he would have been glad to speak of his trouble; unfortunately she did not have one of those responsive natures that create an atmosphere of sympathy. She was a clear-headed, cool-tempered patrician, entirely lacking the divine spark which leaps from the eye and claims kinship with other souls. Sometimes it seemed to Hamilton that his mother was a greater stranger to him than many whom he passed on the street and whose names he did not know. She had always been watchful of his health and comfort, mindful of his manners and morals; knowing that he was noble in his life and successful in his profession, she knew nothing of the temptations and trials that had made him the man he was. Her disposition was such that she could appreciate the achievements of Alexander Hamilton much better than she could sympathize with the struggles of her own son, who always felt that his chief value, in the eyes of his mother, lay in his ancestry.

Because of this lack in his mother, Hamilton found

Marita's ready sympathy all the more precious. It had meant so much to him to look into eyes that read his soul and loved him because of what they read. She had such a sweet way of saying:

"It's the *you* I love."

And now, he would never hear her say it again—never delight in any of the winning ways with which she had bound his heart so fast.

"Heavens!" he muttered to himself, as he rounded the corner of One Hundred and Forty-first Street, and started up the long hill on his way to Convent Avenue, "if I were a drinking man, wouldn't I drink to-night!"

Never had that hill seemed so long to Hamilton. Surely every flagstone had been doubled. It was a weary climb to the heartsick man, and when he finally reached the old house, he felt as if he had walked many miles instead of a few blocks.

No lamps were burning within, but the open fire in the library shed a mellow light into the hall, bringing out in strong relief the winding stair rail, which was a polished copy of the Colonial piazza rail outside. High up, where the stairs turned, was a charming old arched window, and near it hung a steel en-

graving of the members of the first Congress of the United States.

While Hamilton was hanging his hat and coat on the antlers of a large deer head, a maid opened a door at the back of the hall.

"Mrs. Hamilton didn't expect you to-night, sir," she said. "She's gone out to supper."

"I'll have something in the library," replied Hamilton, thankful that his mother was not at home.

He went into the spacious front room, which was probably the "living room" in Alexander Hamilton's day. Since then it had been turned into a library. The high walls, the broad windows and doorways had a dignity all their own. One of Hamilton's college mates once said that "it was just the room to read Homer in," and so it was. You felt that, as the bookcases held not only volumes, but the thought of the ages, so the room held not only furniture, but the spirit of the past. When you looked at the tall clock beside the fireplace you thought of all the lives it had ticked away. The spinning-wheel in the corner reminded you of busy hands and feet forever stilled. Near one of the windows stood a writing-table where you might easily fancy Alexander Hamilton sitting,

drafting some of his famous papers. His quill pen would move steadily back and forth across the paper, pausing occasionally while a thought was formulated, but when it once began to write there would be no hesitating, no interlining.

The few lines of the chair he used, as indeed of all the old mahogany, bespoke the good taste of Hamilton's aristocratic wife, Elizabeth Schuyler. Perhaps in no place was this more evident than in the octagonal dining-room adjoining the library. Here everything from the carved chairs and table to the "dressers" shining with rich silver, was in perfect harmony.

"I'm very sure of one thing," said a friend of Grant's the first time he dined at The Grange; "and that is, Alexander Hamilton never had dyspepsia. He couldn't have had when his meals were served in such a room as this!"

Hamilton was not eating there in state to-night. He had what he wanted in front of the library hearth, and when the tea-tray had been removed, he stretched out his long limbs and lifted his eyes to the portrait above the mantel. This picture had always seemed half alive to him, and now, in the fitful firelight, it was more lifelike than ever.

Hamilton looked at the slender man endowed with such mighty power, and thought of Daniel Webster's words: "He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue gushed forth. He touched the dead corpse of Public Credit, and it sprung upon its feet."

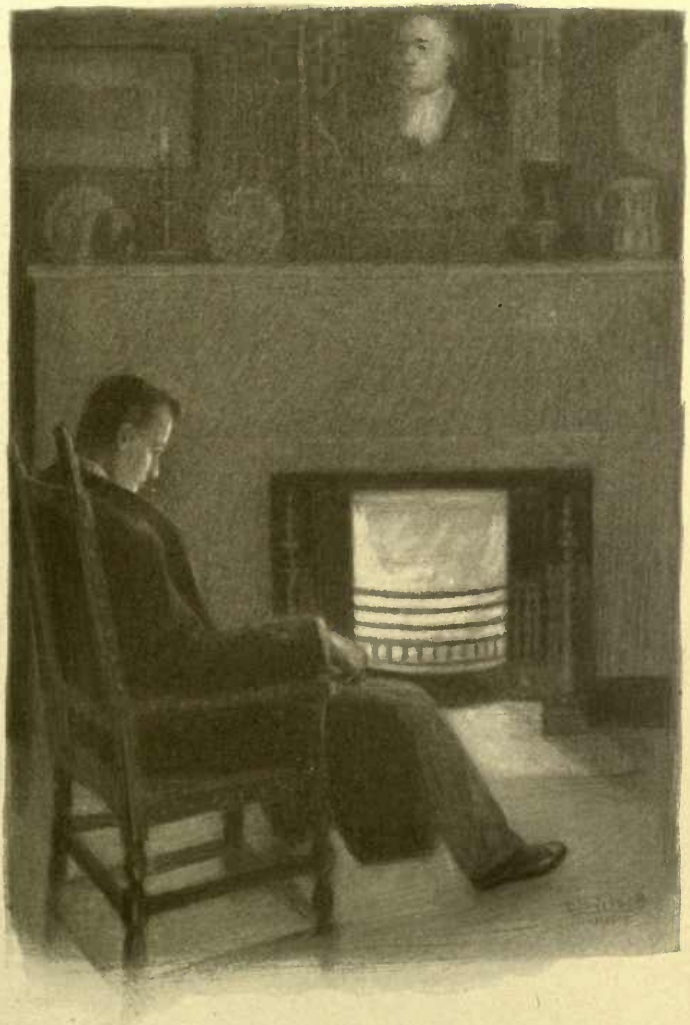
"Well," thought Hamilton, "you were lucky to have a rock to smite and a corpse to touch. If this unhappy affair of mine afforded me something to strike at, I should be more contented."

A flame leapt up, giving a warm tone to the face of the great statesman, and as Hamilton gazed he felt as if a friend were with him—a friend who understood and sympathized, who comforted him with the assurance that the patient siege is often more heroic than the desperate battle.

Hamilton sat there, dizzy with thinking, until, worn out with the strain of the last twenty-four hours, he lost consciousness in merciful sleep.

His mother came in and found him, kindly leaving him undisturbed. The maid locked up the house and extinguished the lights. Still he slept.

When Hamilton awoke it was far into the night. Only a few embers glowed out of the still darkness.



Hamilton sat there, dizzy with thinking.

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He had gone to sleep with the image of Alexander Hamilton before him, he had dreamed of Marita, and now, as he opened his eyes, it seemed to him that they stood side by side, both smiling down at him, and saying together, "Courage!"

He rose and went up to his room. A fire had been kindled here for him, and was still burning brightly under the Colonial wreaths carved in the mantel framing the slate fireplace. It cast a cheery glow upon the green and white striped wall-paper, it gave an inviting air to the quaint four-posted bed, it almost lent a sparkle to the glass handles of the claw-footed bureau. Hamilton was vaguely glad that the fire had been lighted; yet he turned from it and crossing over to the window, opened the solid wood shutters. It was a glorious night. Every star that had a right to show its face was visible. High above the thirteen trees planted by Alexander Hamilton's own hand—one for each of the original colonies—sailed the moon, shedding her silver light over the earth. Hamilton looked at these now leafless trees, so often shaken by storms, thinking that perhaps they were as grateful for the luster shining upon their barrenness as he was for the hope which was all that made his loneliness bearable.

CHAPTER XIV

JUDGE BURTON'S convalescence was a long one. All his powers had been so weakened that time, as well as care, was necessary to restore them. He was like one who had almost entered the land of peace, and was being reluctantly coaxed back again. It seemed enough for him just to lie in the sunlight, to idly gaze at the flowers sent in, or to dream away any number of hours under the spell of Marita's music. His mind, while in a sound condition, had not yet recovered its usual activity. He accepted everything without a question, even Hamilton's absence.

Marita was very thankful for this. Just now she could not have borne any explanations. On the morning after Hamilton's departure she had said to Mrs. Burton:

"Everything is over; it is better so; and please, mother, I don't want to talk about it."

Naturally Mrs. Burton was mystified. She felt felt sure that Marita would not have called her

"mother" if the Judge had betrayed his secret, and as the days passed, she knew that Marita was still ignorant of her parentage. What could have separated those two who loved so deeply? She could not fathom the situation; she could only wonder, and be sorry for Hamilton while her heart ached for Marita. She saw that the girl was passing through fire.

The color left Marita's cheeks, and the light died out of her eyes. She looked like one from whom the joy of life has been taken. It is a fearful thing to read this in the face of one who has always found that joy keen. Something so vital must cause the change, something so bitter.

Marita struggled against the feeling that everything was a mockery. She hated pessimism; yet, since her faith in Hamilton had been so rudely shaken, it was hard to believe in anything. Many an hour she spent in the woods, and when she came home, the fragments of dried leaves on her garments told the story of a woman lying prone on the ground in her anguish. There were times when it seemed as if she must call him back, whether she trusted him or not. She longed for his thoughtful care, and when she thought of the love in his eyes, of the touch of his hand and

lips—ah, it was then that she flung herself down on the fallen leaves! When these moods passed she always came back to the same dreary question, if she could not trust him, who and what could she trust? This doubt was awful to Marita; it meant the loss of many ideals, the wreckage of many beliefs.

"Is it possible," she asked herself, "that I am the same creature who once believed that a golden spot lay in the blackest heart? Now I wonder if a black spot does not lie on the whitest soul."

During those bitter weeks Marita's life was like a stream turned back from its usual channel, forced to make its way through rough fields. Music was her only comfort. If she had not had this outlet Marita might have done something desperate. Hers was not the cool blood that accepts the inevitable and becomes resigned. She had in her veins that fire that leads to rash acts. Sometimes the river lapped so invitingly, its coolness was alluring; sometimes she lingered on the edge of a precipice until the depths below beckoned dangerously. More than once she caught her breath with a shudder, and turning her back upon these temptations, hurried back to her violin and poured forth a torrent of pent-up passion.

Marita often wondered if other women suffered as she did.

"Oh," she thought, "do their arms ache with the emptiness, are their lips parched for one kiss, are they always hungering for the sound of one voice, starved for the lovelight in certain eyes?"

Day and night she struggled and questioned, tried to believe—and doubted. The outcome of Marita's strife was a determination to ask her father to explain matters when he was stronger. She knew it would wound him terribly to know that any words of his should cause so much unhappiness; but after careful consideration she decided that it was only fair to Hamilton to make this request of her father. If he could help her out of this trouble, she knew he would, and resolving to tell him everything as soon as his strength would permit, she summoned all the patience she could—and waited.

One day in December Marita sat by the window in her father's room, watching the first snow whiten the ground. Enough had fallen so that when Sam drove up the hill, returning from his daily trip to the village, the road was marked with wheel tracks. She was listlessly looking at these, wondering how soon they would

disappear, when a maid entered the room with the letters Sam had brought. There was one from Mrs. Chester, and one from a college mate now in California. The third one caused her lips to blanch.

Even if Marita had stopped to think that she ought to read this letter alone, she would not have had the strength to move. She was utterly unnerved at sight of Hamilton's writing. All thought of time and place and consequences was swept away. The torn envelope fell to the floor, and Marita read these lines:

"On Board S. S. 'Augusta Victoria.'

"I cannot leave America without letting you know that you can always reach me by addressing

"c|o Credit Lyonnaise,

"19 Boulevard des Italiens,

"Paris, France."

Marita dropped the paper in her lap and looked out of the window. She was dimly conscious that the wheel tracks were rapidly disappearing; she noticed, in a dreamy way, how the snow was lodging on the boxwood.

Meanwhile the Judge was watching her closely. The envelope had fallen where he could see the handwriting.

"Marita."

She started as if she had been roused from a sound sleep.

"What does Hamilton have to say? When is he coming up?"

"He has gone abroad," she said in a dull tone, thinking of nothing save that the ocean rolled between them.

"He has!" exclaimed the Judge, sitting upright on the lounge.

Marita was stirred now and thoroughly frightened by her father's exclamation. She knew the danger of a shock in his present condition.

"Yes, father dear, it's a business trip, you know. This is a farewell sent back from Sandy Hook."

Marita rearranged his pillows, and asked him if he wouldn't like some music; yet notwithstanding her diverting attentions, while she played and afterwards, the Judge did something he had not done for weeks. He thought.

CHAPTER XV

"MARITA, I'm tired of this. I'm going downstairs," said the Judge on the following morning.

"Why, father, you can't. You haven't even walked around on this floor."

"That doesn't make any difference. I'm going down to the library now. Let me lean on you, and we'll surprise your mother."

The Judge spoke with his old-time energy, and it did Marita's heart good to hear the ring in his voice. Still she felt that it was not wise for him to attempt so much at once; but he couldn't be dissuaded.

When he was comfortably settled in the library Marita called Mrs. Burton. Her surprise and delight afforded the Judge much pleasure. He seemed so natural again that Marita felt as if there were a break in the clouds.

"Now," said the Judge briskly, "I want all the news. I expect you two women to give me a summary of what has occurred since I've been lazing away upstairs."

He looked at Marita as he spoke. She rose and began to straighten a pile of music.

"Well," said Mrs. Burton, watching Marita uneasily. "I don't know that there is much news to tell. There have been some changes in the village school. The Board accepted Miss Stone's resignation, and elected a new teacher. She called here one afternoon to interview the chairman, but you weren't receiving people then. I didn't see her, Marita entertained the young lady."

"She gave me a lively half hour," remarked Marita. "I couldn't quite make out whether she was really vivacious and bright or nervous and trying to make an impression. Any way, she told one school experience that bears repeating. She said she was making out a vaccination list. Coming up to a red-headed boy, she asked him if he had been vaccinated. 'Please, ma'am, wouldn't havin' the smallpox do just as well?'"

The Judge laughed heartily. Like all men of strong character, he thoroughly enjoyed a joke.

"Then she told me about the last time she had ever struck a child."

"Why," interrupted the Judge, "do you mean to

say that teachers still employ that method of discipline?"

"Of course they do, not only in country schools, but in some city schools also."

"Well, I'm surprised. I thought that modern enlightenment was greater than that."

"It doesn't seem to be. I suppose it's easier to strike than to use moral suasion. This young woman said that she struck a boy for some wrong-doing, and he sprang to his feet, exclaiming, 'If you weren't a woman I'd strike back!' The boy's indignation impressed her; she thought about it, and she said she had never struck a child since then."

"Must be good stuff in that girl," the Judge remarked.

"I don't know," said Marita hesitatingly; "I'm not sure of that."

"Why, what has come over you?" asked the Judge, giving her a searching glance. "You used to believe that people were genuine until they had been proven frauds."

"Don't you thing it's just as well to take everybody on suspicion, and let them prove themselves genuine?"

"That point of view may do for a man who has to

knock up against the world, but I can tell you it takes a mighty level-headed man to keep in focus if he goes on that principle. For a woman it's an abominable standpoint, and I want to know who or what has been putting such nonsense into your head."

The Judge seldom spoke to Marita in this authoritative way, and Mrs. Burton wondered how Marita would answer him.

"Dear father," she said, coming up to him and resting her hand on his head, "don't you know the whole world was turned topsy-turvy when you were lying ill?"

Mrs. Burton thought it was time she came to Marita's rescue.

"Now that you are well again and downstairs, I think we ought to have some music to celebrate."

Marita gave her a grateful look as she went towards the piano.

"What is it that you have on the rack?" she continued. "Something festive?"

"Mendelssohn's 'Consolation,'" replied Marita, with a slight shiver.

She placed another sheet of music over it, and was taking up her violin, when they heard the sound of sleigh-bells drawing near.

"It's Doctor Earle," said Mrs. Burton, rising to stir up the fire. "He'll be surprised to find his patient down here."

Marita was much relieved. She did not feel like playing, but it had seemed the only thing to do just then.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the Doctor, bringing in with him the crispness of frosty air. "You *are* progressing."

He greeted them all cordially, and sitting down in front of the fire, held out his hands to the blaze.

"Pretty cold outside—good sleighing."

"How's New York?" the Judge asked of the Doctor, who had been in town a few days.

"Fine! Everything is in full swing."

"Did you go to the opera?" inquired Marita.

"Indeed, I did. Heard 'Tannhauser' and 'Lohengrin.' Nordica is in splendid voice this winter."

"And Jean de Reszke?"

"He's always superb. I think his voice even improves with time. Nobody else can touch him."

"You enjoy Grand Opera, I judge," remarked Mrs. Burton.

"Very much. I know of nothing that lifts you

out of yourself—carries you into another world—more than that does. It is really a wonderful sight to see that great opera house filled with a throng held spellbound by the most magnificent voices in the world."

"Is the throng spellbound?" asked the Judge.

"Yes, it is," returned the Doctor. "The audience is not nearly so conversational as the critics try to make out."

"Those critics!" said the Judge, shaking his head. "They seem to delight in extracting the joy out of life."

Mrs. Burton looked up from her needlework, asking gently: "Don't you feel sorry for them, though? Theirs is such a thankless profession."

"That depends upon the spirit they carry into it," Marita remarked. "I think if more of them felt as Goethe did, that sympathy is the most essential quality in critics, they would not find their profession so thankless."

"You have a remarkable way of hitting the nail on the head," said the Doctor, with a look of admiration.

The Judge laughed.

"That's a great compliment, Marita. You know women are proverbially bad at driving nails."

"The Judge has certainly recovered," exclaimed the Doctor. "Speaking of critics, reminds me of a remark I heard a thinker make not long ago. He said that 'criticism is a good brake, but a very poor propelling power.'"

"Capital" cried the Judge.

"That's an excellent thought," said Marita, with an emphatic nod of her head.

"So it impressed me," returned the Doctor. Then he spoke of the theatres, and told of an art exhibit he had attended. Indeed, he was really delightful this morning; there was something unusually buoyant in his manner.

When Doctor Earle rose to go, he turned to the Judge and said in an off-hand way:

"I didn't tell you that I saw your friend Hamilton."

"No, you didn't."

"Why, I went down to see a friend sail on the 'Augusta Victoria, and I met him on board."

"Yes," replied the Judge, "he's gone over on a business trip."

"Business? Well, perhaps he calls it that, but I shouldn't call it business to go abroad for an indefinite length of time, just to travel where fancy led."

"I don't think I should either," the Judge said slowly, looking at the two red spots burning in Marita's cheeks.

The Doctor saw them, too. He said good-by quietly, but his eyes beamed as Mrs. Burton accompanied him to the front door.

The moment they were alone the Judge turned to his daughter, saying:

"Come now, Marita, out with it. Why has Hamilton gone to Europe?"

CHAPTER XVI

"WHY has he gone?" Marita asked in a dazed way.

"Yes," said the Judge with his old-time determination. "You told me Hamilton had gone on business—the Doctor says he has gone for pleasure. Now I want the *real* reason."

These words quickly dispelled Marita's bewilderment. Her father was thoroughly roused, and she knew that the sooner she spoke the better.

"The truth is, I don't know why he has gone, unless it is to forget."

"Forget what?" demanded the Judge, drawing his heavy eyebrows together.

"Oh, father," she cried, "it's all over—all ended!" Her voice broke; she sank to the floor, clasping his knees and shuddering like a wounded bird.

It was in such moments as these that the Judge saw the mother live again in the daughter. There was the same passion, the same abandon. How often in that old Roman garden had Anita thrown herself

at his feet, and clung to him as their child was clinging now. Taking Marita's face between his hands, he looked long into the eyes that seemed to mirror his past in their troubled depths. Something he saw there swept away everything save remorse. The Judge drew Marita into his arms and held her close, feeling that no sacrifice was too great if it would only bring her peace.

Neither one of them spoke, but while Marita was finding untold comfort in her father's love, he was thinking that of all the cowards he ever knew, Hamilton was the greatest. After accepting the situation as he had when he first learned the secret of Marita's birth, then to reconsider, as he apparently had, and leave her during her father's illness—could anything be more contemptible? In the midst of his wrath, though, the Judge felt that there must be a mistake somewhere. This feeling, indefinite at first, grew stronger, and he resolved to question Marita and find out why they had parted.

"Now tell me everything, dear," he said, touching her forehead with his lips. "Surely you are not afraid to speak freely to your father?"

"Oh, no! I am glad to speak, I want to. I would

have spoken long before if you had been stronger. That is why I said he had gone over on a business trip. I thought it better not to explain until you were well again."

"I see," said the Judge, stroking her hair. "How long is it since you saw Hamilton?"

"Not since the first days of your illness."

"He was up here then?"

"Yes, he was here. It was then that—I sent him away."

"You sent him away?" This didn't look as if Hamilton had played the coward. The Judge was puzzled. "Why, Marita, why did you send him away?"

"Because I found that I couldn't trust him. He would not give me his confidence in a vital matter, and I could not marry him after he refused it."

The Judge looked at Marita thoughtfully.

"What was this vital matter?" he asked earnestly.

"I learned that there was something in his life which would prevent me from marrying him if I knew it."

"Something in *his* life?" said the Judge, so much astonished that he could not believe he had heard aright.

"Yes," Marita answered, with increasing agitation.

"I asked him to tell me what it was; I begged him to be frank, but he persisted in silence, so I sent him away. How could I do otherwise? And yet—oh, how could I have told him to go for *any* reason? Father, you don't know how hard it is, you don't know how I love him!"

"Poor child," murmured the Judge, trying to soothe her distress. He was completely mystified at this new turn of affairs. What could there be in Hamilton's life, and——

"Marita, how did you learn of this thing?"

She had dreaded this question, and now that it had been asked Marita could not summon the courage to answer it fully. After a moment's hesitation, she said:

"It came to me accidentally."

"You're very sure there *is* something?"

"Yes."

"You're convinced that there is no mistake?"

Marita could not stand this any longer. She sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

"Father, how can you ask all these questions when you know there is something in his life!"

"I know?"

"Of course you do; you told me yourself."

"I told you?"

"Certainly; one night when Grant and I were taking care of you."

"What—*what* did I say?"

"You said, 'Don't tell her, Hamilton, don't tell her. She'll never marry you if you do.'"

"Did I say that?" he asked faintly, feeling as if he had signed his own death warrant.

"Yes, father, you did, and now you are the only one who can help me. Tell me—tell me what it is, this awful thing that you think would keep me from marrying him. Don't you know there is almost nothing a woman will not forgive when she loves as I do? But she must know *what* she forgives. Grant is not capable of a meanness. If he has done a great wrong, there must have been great provocation; if he has committed a crime, it was done in the heat of passion. Whatever it is, don't you see that I cannot pardon blindly? Surely you understand, you always have understood me so well. And you will lift this load; oh, father, you will tell me what shadows his life."

Marita had spoken so rapidly that she had not observed the effect of her words. As she uttered her last appeal, however, she noticed the Judge's pallor, and

adding in her impulsive way, "Not now—not now! I'm going to get you some brandy," she hastened from the room.

The Judge leaned back in his chair more stunned than exhausted. The situation was appalling to him. He saw how Marita had interpreted those fateful words; he marvelled at Hamilton's heroic silence; he understood how, after waiting weeks without hearing that the Judge had spoken, Grant had been unable to bear it longer and had gone abroad.

At first it seemed to the Judge that there was only one thing for him to do, and that was to tell Marita the whole truth; but after a little he began to wonder what good that would do. He knew that she would never marry if he told her, and gradually he came to believe that she might as well think Hamilton unworthy as to feel herself unfit. True, the Judge winced when he remembered how Hamilton had kept his word under such trying circumstances. He was not treating squarely a man who had sacrificed so much for him, but the Judge had long been accustomed to consider Marita before all other people, and he chose what he thought would be the easiest course for his daughter.

When Marita returned with the brandy, her father drained the glass, and then, before she could remonstrate, he said:

"You want me to explain the words I spoke in my delirium; but, Marita, I cannot feel that it is best to explain them." His heart sank when he saw the look on her face. "I have carefully considered the matter, and you know, dear, that I could only decide upon what I believe to be best for you."

Marita scarcely heard his last words. She knew that he would not explain. That was enough. Her only hope was gone.

"I was afraid of this," she said, speaking with the calmness which is so much more terrible than excitement. "I felt sure that since he did not speak, you would not; but I hoped——"

"Marita," cried the Judge, cut to the quick when she attributed his silence to Hamilton's, "you must forget it all; you are young; you have so much of life before you. I will take you away; I will be everything to you. Oh, my child," and he opened his arms, "no one can ever love you as your father does."

CHAPTER XVII

THE north had been left so far behind that the sleeper was uncomfortably warm. Ringing for the porter, Marita asked him to raise the window. With the first breath of balmy southern air, she had that peculiar sense of being familiar with something she knew to be utterly strange. It seemed to Marita that she had always lived in this atmosphere. She thought of how the frosty air tingled on the morning they left Lindenhurst as one might think of something entirely foreign. Could it be that she had ever gloried in the snow, had walked miles in it because she loved to step into its cold whiteness, and delighted in feeling it light upon her face? Thinking of the ice-hung evergreens guarding the hills at home, Marita shivered a little, gladly resting her eyes on the sunlit palms. Oh, that southern sun! It had such a penetrating quality; it entered her very bones and instilled its fire into every drop of blood. She longed to get out into it, lie in it, bathe in it, revel in it for hours; reaching her hand

out of the car window, Marita smiled as the rays warmed her fingers.

Her father, sitting opposite, watched her closely, observing a dreamy look in her eyes, which he never remembered having seen there before. When Marita stretched out her hand in the sunlight, the gesture almost startled the Judge, it was so like her mother. Often had he seen Anita Mondello extend her arms to the burning sun of Italy in the mere ecstasy of luxuriating in its warmth. In some ways Marita resembled her mother so much that at times the Judge was weighted with fear.

"Perhaps I have made a mistake in bringing her South," thought the Judge. "It might have been wiser to have kept her North. Still, the girl must fight her battles, I cannot always shield her."

He knew the impossibility of protecting his daughter from the dangers so likely to beset a woman of her temperament. This always worried him; and now he was doubly disturbed by Marita's shaken faith in humanity. She had always been so trustful, it hurt the Judge cruelly to see her doubting rather than believing; yet what else could he expect? Sometimes he thought she must even distrust him, thinking that he

had given her to a man whose life held something inexplainable to her; he knew, though, that she attributed his action to a desire for her happiness. Still, though she never seemed to doubt her father, it was easy to see that Marita felt as if nothing was on a firm basis, and this grieved the Judge inexpressibly.

"My dear," he said, leaning towards her anxiously, "do you like the South?"

"Oh yes, father, it's glorious!"

"Why do you find it so attractive? Surely this country we are passing through is prosaic enough with its stretches of dry grass and forlorn-looking palms."

"It isn't the scenery; it's the air—and the sun. In the North you never feel this delicious warmth in every vein; up there the sun shines *on* you, here it shines *into* you."

"I'm glad you enjoy it, dear," said the Judge, though he didn't like to see Marita hold her hand in the sunlight again.

The journey was soon over now, and after they arrived at Palm Beach Marita was more like herself than at any time since that bitter night when Hamilton left Lindenhurst. Here was something new to enjoy, and

she enjoyed it with all the intensity of her nature. From the windows of Marita's room at The Breakers she could feast her eyes upon masses of tropical foliage stirred by breezes from the ocean lazily lapping the shore. Nothing, however, delighted her as much as the dreamy lake, so different from the river at home! Marita was accustomed to think of water as lively, rippling, sparkling; therefore this languorous lake was a revelation to her. She would drift for hours, never caring to row, as she once did, just for the joy of the motion. Sometimes as she lay in her boat, basking in the sun and trailing her hand in the tepid water, Marita's thoughts went back to the woody dell by the spring which she and Hamilton had visited on that happy morning when love lay in their hearts, unawakened, though stirring. She could see his face as he reclined at her feet, looking up into her eyes while she told of the part that nook had played in her life. How interested he had been, and how quick to shield her from reproof when they returned to Lindenhurst and Mrs. Burton had suspected Marita of a wild run. Marita thought, too, of the "uncheckable something," and wondered if it had been crushed out of her; not feeling the energetic impulses of those days, she did

not realize that it was smouldering within her in a far more dangerous form.

Then, again, Marita lived through that day at Farno's, when Hamilton had taken the Doctor's insult with such dignity, and later had saved her life; that throbbing night at Tuxedo, when their hearts had leapt out so passionately; that first radiant day as lovers, and all the happy days that followed until her father's illness came and joy went out of her life.

Hamilton's face always came before Marita with painful distinctness. She wished the vision would grow dim; it was maddening to see those features so clearly, to catch the lovelight in the eyes, the tender smile around the mouth, and when the noble head bent towards her, then it was that drifting became intolerable, and seizing the oars she would pull ashore and walk for hours up and down the avenues of palms and big-leaved plants.

CHAPTER XVIII

"MARITA has changed since we came here," remarked Mrs. Burton as she strolled along the bank of the lake with her husband.

"In what way?" asked the Judge, anxiously.

"Surely you must have noticed her unnatural lassitude. She seems to have lost all desire for action, and cares only to lie in the sunlight or drift about in a boat."

"I see her walking quite often," he said, trying to reassure himself.

"She never walks with her former vim; her steps are measured where they used to be brisk."

"Well, my dear, you must remember that Marita is wading in deep waters. Love means much to her, and the whole course of her being has been turned back from its natural direction."

"I appreciate that, but I don't see why it should affect her so differently. At home she couldn't do enough; from dawn to dark she was tramping the woods, or rowing, or galloping over the hills on a horse."

The Judge made no reply; he contented himself with thinking that Mrs. Burton might understand if she had ever seen Anita Mondello in Italy. His eyes wandered absent-mindedly over the lake, seeking Marita's boat. It was there, floating aimlessly about, while Marita lay on the cushions, her veins throbbing with the intoxication of the southern air. During the long afternoon she drifted to and fro, while her father sat on the shore, reading aloud to Mrs. Burton, who occasionally looked up from her embroidery to see how far the capricious breeze had carried the boat from the point where she saw it last.

Marita lingered on the water until the sun sank so low that the Judge had to signal for her to come ashore.

"Now look at that," said Mrs. Burton. "Do you see how she's pulling in, first one oar and then the other? She never rowed like that in the North; she was only too glad to use both oars and pull with all her might, especially since her trouble came. Why, I've seen her rowing on the river at racing speed; she would come in too tired to dress for dinner."

"She's almost too late to dress for it now."

"Marita won't care."

"That's the trouble," said the Judge, his face darkening. "She doesn't care."

When the boat touched land, Marita didn't spring out as she used to in the old days; she leisurely stepped from the boat to the shore, and as she did so the Judge saw a new grace in every move. It was an indescribable charm which had blossomed out in this sunny clime, and the Judge would rather have lost his right hand than to have found this charm in his daughter.

"You are late, my dear," he said, fastening the boat.

"Time doesn't matter," returned Marita, listlessly.

"You forget that you have a toilet to make," Mrs. Burton mildly suggested.

"Bother toilets! Who cares whether one dresses or not?"

"I care, Marita," and the Judge looked at her reproachfully.

"You dear father, of course you care," she said, instantly repentant. "To please you I'll make myself gorgeous to behold."

Marita kept her word, creating quite a sensation when she entered the dining-hall, radiant in a gown of deep crimson crêpe. The whiteness of her superbly moulded shoulders was enhanced by a large corsage

knot of black velvet, and she carried an exquisite fan of black lace.

After a late dinner Marita went with Mrs. Burton to the writing-room, while the Judge smoked his evening cigar. She was just finishing a letter when some one paused behind her chair and she heard a familiar voice saying :

"Palm Beach seems to agree with you."

"Why, Doctor Earle!" Marita exclaimed in astonishment, looking around to find the Doctor and his sister, Virginia, smiling at her surprise.

"I'm awfully glad to find you here," said Virginia, who had the great admiration for Marita that a young girl often has for an attractive woman. "We were afraid you might have gone on to some other place."

"How did you come to wander down here?" asked Marita, not altogether pleased at the Doctor's arrival.

"Virginia had an attack of bronchitis," the Doctor replied, "and I thought a southern trip would do her good. Of course we came to Palm Beach, no other place had so much attraction."

Marita was annoyed. The Doctor had known her long enough, she thought, to find out that she hated such speeches.

"It's delightful here," was all she said.

"I hope you're not sorry we came?" asked the Doctor.

"I'm very glad to see you, especially Virginia," said Marita, smiling at the large-eyed girl.

"You are not exactly complimentary," said the Doctor, rather amused at her frankness.

"I never am. I'm quite fond of being a miser in that respect."

"That's true, Miss Burton. Any one who wins a compliment from you deserves it."

"I think it's lovely to be like that," said Virginia, her face full of adoring enthusiasm.

"You're looking very well," remarked the Doctor, conscious of the new charm the Judge had noticed. "How is your father?"

"Much improved; the South has done wonders for him. Come over here where mother is; she'll be so surprised."

As Marita led the way down the long room, Virginia whispered to her brother:

"Isn't she glorious to-night?"

The Doctor smiled and nodded, saying to himself: "She's more than that, she's maddening."

They had scarcely exchanged greetings with Mrs. Burton when the Judge appeared in the doorway, and seeing them, hastened forward.

"Well, I declare! Where'd you hail from, Doctor?"

"New York City and a snowstorm that's almost a blizzard," said the Doctor, shaking hands with the Judge.

"You don't say so! Virginia, how do you do, my dear."

"I'm better, thank you; came down here to get well."

"You selected a mighty good place, and I'm glad to see you both. We needed a little enlivening. I suspect that girl of mine was getting lonely, especially evenings when the dancing's going on."

"That's a figment of father's imagination," said Marita.

"I hope it isn't," replied the Doctor.

"Suppose we go over to The Poinciana now," suggested the Judge. "It's a pleasant walk, and they'll be dancing there; perhaps you'd like to take a turn."

"I wouldn't like anything better," said the Doctor, hoping Marita would express a desire to go.

"What do you say, Marita?" asked her father.

"I'll go if the rest of you care to," she answered.

Mrs. Burton looked at Marita sorrowfully, thinking of the days when she would have accepted the suggestion with enthusiasm.

"Let us go, then," said the Judge, hoping a dance would arouse Marita.

"You girls must have some light wraps," insisted the Doctor.

They went after those filmy nothings which women wear with evening gowns, though they found it too warm outside for even a covering of liberty silk.

"Isn't this a wonderful walk?" asked Marita of the Doctor, as they went on ahead of the others, passing between the rows of stately palmettos.

"Wonderful," he replied, looking at her shoulders gleaming like marble in the moonlight.

"I never tire of this promenade between the two hotels. It's always fascinating at any hour. I can't tell whether it is more witching in the heat of the sun or the light of the moon."

"Quite like some people," said the Doctor, his voice a little unsteady.

"Did you leave things prospering at home?" asked Marita, seeing that she must keep the Doctor to commonplaces.

"The town is absolutely dead this winter; I couldn't stand it any longer, you see."

"How about your work; could you come away and leave all your patients?"

"Turned them over to another man."

"Weren't you sorry to do that? Don't you get interested in cases, and want to carry them through?"

"Oh yes, sometimes; still they're only cases, they're not people to us, you know."

"Surely all doctors don't feel that way."

"How can they do good work if they allow their sympathies to become involved?"

"It seems to me," said Marita thoughtfully, "that a physician should have the keenest sympathy, because it is through sympathy that we understand many things that without it would remain unknown to the end of the chapter."

"I fail to see how sympathy is going to help you diagnose a case."

"A physician's province doesn't lie entirely within the bounds of medical science. Perhaps sympathy

wouldn't help you diagnose a case, but it might help you vastly in the treatment of it."

"Don't you know that if a doctor allows himself to become personally interested, his treatment may not be as severe as the case demands?"

"It always makes me cross to hear any one say that," said Marita, with an energy that would have delighted her father. "Why should a doctor allow his sympathies to interfere with what his judgment declares to be the right treatment? I've no patience with a man who can't do the right thing for a patient because he is sorry for the pain or discomfort it may bring."

"You think, then, that a physician should have keen sympathies under perfect control?"

"That's exactly what I think."

"Miss Burton, you ought to be a doctor's wife."

"Oh, no indeed! I'd have something to say about his business, and that he wouldn't like at all."

"He'd like anything you said," remarked the Doctor, wishing they had not reached the ballroom.

Now that Marita saw the polished floor and heard the tempting strains of a waltz, she wanted to dance, though it was not the lively longing she used to have,

it was rather a languorous desire just to sway her body and move her feet with the music.

The Doctor didn't ask her to dance; he merely slipped his arm about her, and they glided off, slowly, dreamily, circling gracefully around and around. A woman is never more attractive than when she is dancing. Her color deepens, her eyes brighten, her lips part, her hair fluffs, her whole figure expresses every physical grace she has.

The Judge and Mrs. Burton and Virginia were not the only ones absorbed in watching Marita dance. As they glided in and out among the dancers, Marita was conscious of the intent gaze of a man who stood near her father. Once her eyes met his directly, and it seemed to her that she had never seen a more compelling look. Personal magnetism is a mysterious force. It arises from so many different causes, and is manifested in such various ways. Whatever magnetic power this man possessed was of the kind which at once attracts and repels. He was very handsome, his large, speaking eyes overarched with heavy brows, his full lips partly covered by an unusually well-shaped mustache. Though his chin was somewhat irresolute, there were lines in his face which made one feel

that his determination was strong enough to make it most unpleasant for any one who opposed his will. He was tall and so splendidly proportioned that many a sculptor longed to model his figure.

With a woman's quick eye, Marita noticed these things when the dance was over and he chanced to be looking away from her as she passed him with the Doctor. Just as she thought they had left him behind, the stranger stepped up to them, saying :

" Earle—Henry Earle, don't you remember me? "

The Doctor looked blank for an instant, then a smile broke over his face, and he held out his hand in cordial greeting.

" Of course I remember you. How are you, and how've you been all this time? "

" Well enough to keep on earth."

" Not commonplace," thought Marita.

" Miss Burton, allow me to present an old college friend, Mr. Channing."

Again their eyes met, this closer contact bringing to Marita a still greater sense of his magnetic power. She could scarcely withdraw her gaze, yet she wanted to; and afterwards, though she tried to evade his look, several times her eyes were irresistibly drawn to his.

When the orchestra played the first strains of another waltz Marita wanted to pick up her skirts and run away. She knew Mr. Channing would ask her to dance—she knew it would be discourteous to refuse, yet the thought of dancing with him sent a little cold shiver down her spine.

The music swelled louder, and Mr. Channing looked at Marita opening his lips to speak, when the Judge touched her arm.

"Marita, your mother and I are going back now, and——"

"Very well, I am ready," she answered quickly, not giving him a chance to tell her that she could remain and return later with Virginia and the Doctor.

The Judge was about to urge her to stay longer, but her eyes told him that she wanted to go, and since her wish was always his law, he said nothing. After the Judge exchanged a few words with Mr. Channing, whom the Doctor presented, they all crossed over to where Mrs. Burton and Virginia were sitting. As they threaded their way in and out among those who were watching the dancers, Marita went first with her father. She knew Mr. Channing never lost sight of her for a moment; she felt that his eyes followed every move;

she longed to get out into the air; it was stifling in the ballroom; the perfume—something—was suffocating.

Marita didn't know quite how it happened, but when she looked about for her wrap, she saw it on Mr. Channing's arm. Instinct seemed to have told him which one belonged to her.

"You are looking for this?" he asked, laying it over her shoulders, and leaving a burning spot where his hand touched her skin. Then he bent his lips close to her ear, saying: "We shall dance together some other night."

CHAPTER XIX

MARITA came down the next morning feeling confident that she had shaken off the spell of the previous night. She was dressed in a dark blue walking skirt, a white shirt waist of the simplest style and a perfectly plain sailor hat.

"There's no glamour about such a costume," she said to herself as she stood before the mirror adjusting her linen collar, "and a sailor is the most unbecoming thing I can wear."

On entering the dining-hall Marita was not surprised to see Mr. Channing breakfasting at the Doctor's table. She didn't know how long he had been at Palm Beach nor where he was staying, but something told her that he would be at The Breakers this morning. Though Marita felt so sure of herself, when Mr. Channing looked up with a smile of recognition, she quivered like a bird under the gaze of a snake.

"I'm thankful their table isn't near ours," she thought. "I hate that man, and I won't have anything to do with him."

Yet after breakfast, when Mr. Channing approached Marita on the veranda, she didn't retreat as she might have done; she lingered there, talking with him until the Doctor came up and suggested a morning on the lake.

"I know Miss Burton is fond of the water," said the Doctor. "I have seen her at home rowing as if she were training for the Harvard crew."

"You won't see me doing that down here," returned Marita. "I enjoy this lake as much as I did our river"—she hesitated an instant—"though in quite a different way."

"How different?" inquired Mr. Channing.

"Why, up home I always had an objective point and was intent on getting there. Here I only want to drift; I don't care where the breeze takes me, seldom using my oars. Perhaps it's dormant laziness cropping out, though it may be the climate, which is certainly enervating."

"And delicious," added Mr. Channing with a rapturous droop of the eyelids.

Marita turned her head away, conscious of a peculiar sinking sensation.

"Now," said the Doctor, "I'll find Virginia, and we'll get a boat for four."

"Oh, I can't go with you," Marita hastened to say. "Father has already engaged our bicycle chairs for the morning." She didn't add that she had purposely planned the expedition to avoid being with them.

"You can't go!" exclaimed the Doctor, with evident disappointment.

Mr. Channing said nothing, he only smiled.

Marita saw that smile, and was ready to stamp her foot in vexation.

"Not this time," she said, speaking abruptly and turning to go.

The Doctor would have gladly changed the boat trip for one in the bicycle chairs, had he received any encouragement from Marita; but her manner was rather forbidding, and he felt that it would not be wise to suggest such an arrangement.

Mr. Channing merely remarked: "Since Miss Burton cannot go with us to-day, of course she will go to-morrow."

"Certainly," she said, speaking over her shoulder as she walked away. Marita hoped this ready consent would relieve Mr. Channing of the impression that she wished to avoid him. It was most disconcerting to feel that this man read her like print; that he knew

her desire to evade his presence, could even smile over this proof of his power. "He is common clay," she thought, as she closed the door of her room, "and I'm worse than clay to feel his influence. Why *did* he come into my life? Weren't my heartstrings stretched to their utmost? Wasn't it hard enough to live without Grant? Didn't I know that men were unworthy of trust? I knew the hurt of love turned back upon itself. Why do I have to feel the smart of such a thing as this? I despise the man, yet I'm drawn to him like a needle to the magnet. It's disgraceful, but it's true, and there's no use denying it."

It was not surprising that Marita was somewhat absent-minded during her morning ride. She felt, in an indefinite sort of way, that it was to be a battle to the end; yet while she shuddered at the thought of what the end might be, a dreamy look stole into her eyes a look such as the Judge had seen in the eyes of Anita Mondello when the sunny days drew to a close and the air was heavy with perfume.

Always keenly alive to anything that concerned Marita, the Judge scented some kind of disturbance when Marita insisted on lunching at The Poinciana, and not returning to The Breakers until late in the afternoon.

"What's the matter, honey? Which man bothers you, or is it both?"

"Both of them, father, all of them—everybody but you."

The Judge was deeply pained.

"Poor child," he thought, "must she go through life questioning every man's truth? Will she never trust again, but always doubt? How her outlook has changed—once so bright, and now so dark." The Judge looked at Marita, thinking of how a few words from him would restore her belief in Hamilton. If he had known how she stood on the verge of an awful abyss, he would have told her everything, realizing that the thought of Hamilton, true and blameless, would be her greatest safeguard; but he did not know, and he did not speak.

When they reached The Breakers it was near the dinner hour, and Marita went directly to her room, where she dressed herself all in black. A day out-of-doors usually heightened her color, but Marita was pale to-night, her eyes shining with unnatural brightness as she hooked the low-cut gown and pulled the long black lace sleeves well over the hands.

"Black is very becoming to you."

It was after dinner, and Mr. Channing was sitting beside Marita in the drawing-room. His voice vibrated in her ears, stirring every fibre in her body; it required an effort to carelessly remark:

"Most people think differently."

"Probably because you look so patrician and unapproachable in black."

"You like to have people look unapproachable, then?"

"Decidedly; I find more pleasure in approaching them when barriers must be levelled."

"Suppose you are not allowed to approach?"

"I seldom fail—when I try."

Though these words were uttered in a low tone, Marita felt as if they had been shouted out to the world. She seemed to hear them on all sides, every mouth in the room seemed to open, saying, "He seldom fails—when he tries." Marita couldn't sit still, she arose and walked over to the piano. "He shall fail this time," she said through shut teeth, trying to keep her hand from trembling as she took up a sheet of music.

Mr. Channing deliberately followed her.

"Are you going to give me the dance to-night that I should have had last night?"

"No," said Marita, looking him straight in the face, "I am not going to dance to-night."

Again she saw the exasperating smile of the morning hovering around his lips.

"The dance will keep," Mr. Channing replied. He spoke quietly, but Marita knew that his calmness was dangerous. She thought of the lull before the storm, of how often she had waited beneath the mountain during that ominous pause when all Nature is still, gathering her forces for an outbreak. She thought, too, of how the mountain had shielded her, of how the storm had raged in its wild fury, and left her unharmed. Where, now, was the mountain? The lull was here, the storm was coming—and she saw no protecting mountain.

"Miss Burton," said the Doctor, coming up with Virginia, "Do you never delight these people with your music?"

"Oh, no," answered Marita, "it is altogether too public."

"You ought to hear her play, Mr. Channing," said Virginia, ever ready to sing Marita's praises. "She can make a violin talk."

"I can imagine she might."

"If you could only play for us," continued Virginia, addressing Marita with great earnestness, "it would be so heavenly!"

"I'm very sorry," Marita replied, "but surely you can understand my reluctance to play here with so many strangers around."

"Then why not play outside, down by the lake?" suggested Mr. Channing.

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Virginia. "You will, won't you?"

"Do," urged the Doctor. "It would be delightful."

Marita didn't want to play, yet it would be ungracious to refuse, and she dreaded seeing Mr. Channing's lips curl with the smile she had seen twice to-day.

"If you really care so much about it, I'll go for the violin."

"Thank you very much," said the Doctor, with an eloquent look. "We'll wait for you on the veranda."

Marita soon appeared, carrying her violin and accompanied by the Judge and Mrs. Burton. They joined the others, and after passing through the palmetto walk, wound in and out among the palms following a path so figured by the moonlight that

Marita said "it resembled a strip of black and white brocade."

By the time they had reached the lake, almost motionless in the silver radiance, Marita felt like resigning herself to its coolness. Her cheeks burned, the tropical fragrance was stifling, the atmosphere seemed charged with a choking quality. The moon touched all things with a languorous charm, and Marita thought she had never seen nature so weirdly beautiful.

Marita stood a moment, gazing out over the water. For the first time in her life she dreaded to take up her violin. How could she touch those strings when her heart was so weighted with fear? Her fingers tightened on the graceful neck as Mr. Channing came close to her side and almost whispered:

"Now come; play. Let your violin speak your thoughts; let it voice all the dreams behind those eyes; let every note tell of your glorious fire. I long to listen. Play."

His passionate tones held Marita spellbound. She stood motionless, unable to raise her hand. It was as if she had been hypnotized, entirely deprived of volition.

"Play," he said again, "play—for *me*."

Mechanically she lifted her violin, placed it under her chin and drew the bow across the strings. With the sound of the first note the charm was broken. Marita drew away from Mr. Channing as she played, a flood of indignation sweeping aside every other feeling. How dared he speak to her like that? No man had ever approached her in that way before, and if he thought to hear an outpouring, he was very much mistaken. Then the realization of her own weakness came to her so clearly that everything else was lost in a wave of remorse. Strains of such sadness filled the night that the Judge's heart sank, the Doctor's brow wrinkled and Mr. Channing ground his teeth. Marita played on and on, not stopping at all, blending one thing into another. Once more she breathed freely; for the time at least she had shaken off the fascination of this man; yet there was no light joy in her liberation, there was only regret that such a power could influence her so deeply.

"You're not in the mood for music to-night," said the Judge, when at last Marita paused.

"Yes, I am," she replied decidedly.

"Your music is so sad," said the Doctor. "It is strangely unlike yourself."

"Music is always an expression of one's inner self," answered Marita.

"Suppose you play something more in harmony with this southern night," Mr. Channing remarked. It was well that Marita did not see the expression of his face.

"I know of nothing more appropriate than this," she retorted, beginning an exquisite rendition of the "Ave Maria."

"She's punishing some one," thought the Judge, wondering and worrying a little.

As soon as the last note sounded the Judge arose, and no one demurred when he led the way back to the hotel, walking beside his daughter. They stopped a moment at the foot of the stairs before leaving the others.

"Good-night," said Mr. Channing, speaking so low that only Marita heard his words. "I shall never ask you to play again."

CHAPTER XX

ALL through the night Marita battled with herself. She was wrought up to such a pitch that sleep was impossible. It never occurred to her to undress; she walked the floor in her black gown, questioning, blaming, accusing herself. The situation was perfectly clear to her. She realized the danger of Mr. Channing's presence; she knew he might influence her again, and perhaps another time music would not come to the rescue. Marita understood his power; she knew her own weakness, though never dreaming that she had to contend against the blood of Italy.

Standing by the window she drew in long breaths of the wonderful air, gazing wistfully into the luxuriant moonlit foliage.

"Why are we put in this beautiful world," she thought, "only to wear ourselves out in struggle? Is it not enough to wreck a girl's life; might not the wreck be allowed to drift without sinking into the depths? Oh, it is cruel! First to lose faith in the man you love, and then to lose faith in yourself. It was bad enough

to know that Grant isn't worthy of trust; it's worse to know that I can be swayed like this. I *won't* be swayed; I'll turn my back on this place to-morrow! Father will gladly take me away if he knows I want to go."

Marita was so taken with this idea of leaving that she wanted to pack her trunk at once. For a time she thought only of the relief of getting away from Mr. Channing. It was such an easy way of escaping, and seemed to her the only thing to do. Then she fell to thinking of the actual going, the final good-by, and Mr. Channing's face rose before her—with that smile. Heavens! What an admission departure would be; how well he would know why she went. Should she give him such proof of his power? Never! What was she made of any way? Was she to turn coward and run away from the fight? Where was the spirit that had always characterized her every action? Was it to be drugged by the climate, steeped in fascination, subdued like some nerveless thing? No, it should rise up and sustain her. She would not go; she would stay; she would brave every advance; she would float the flag of defiance, hoping for strength to conquer.

While Marita was reaching this decision clouds had

frequently darkened the moon. Gradually they gathered into a great black mass, and as the first grayness of dawn appeared, the rain dashed against the window panes.

Exhausted by her long vigil, Marita threw herself upon the bed, sick at heart and discouraged, yet grappling her determination to win the struggle. Her last conscious thought was, "I hope it keeps on raining, then there'll be no boating."

Maritas wish was not granted; it stopped raining long before she was awakened by a tap on the door.

"Marita, aren't you coming to breakfast?"

"Yes, mother, in just a few minutes," she said, springing to her feet.

Marita felt as if her clothing had grown fast to her body.

"What would mother think if she could see me like this! How foolish not to undress, and I've slept so late that a bath before breakfast is out of the question. I wonder if hot water will remove that darkness under my eyes?"

Dressing hurriedly, Marita reached the table just as the Judge and Mrs. Burton were finishing their morning meal.

"Her late sleep hasn't rested her much," thought the Judge. "What's the matter with the child anyway? There's something wrong, I know."

Marita saw that her father was watching her closely. "Dear father, if he only knew, how grieved he would be," she thought. Yes, and if he knew, how well he would understand.

"My dear," said the Judge, leaning towards Marita, "are you tired of Palm Beach? Would you like to go to some other place?"

Marita's heart leaped. Oh, how she longed to go away! For a moment her plate received close attention; then she straightened up a little, replying:

"No, father, I think—it is best to remain here."

"You know that whenever you want a change, you have only to say the word."

"I know that you are the most indulgent of fathers," Marita replied, smiling into the Judge's anxious eyes.

While she was still at the breakfast-table the Doctor came to ask when she'd be ready to go on the lake.

"I'm ready now," she said, rising and going with him.

It was a perfect morning. The rain had swept

away every cloud, and the water was so still that the lake seemed like a great mirror.

"I wish there were a few light clouds to be seen," said Marita. "Such a clear sky is almost painful to the eye."

"There is an intensity, though, in that unclouded blue such as you never have when it's flecked with white."

Mr. Channing looked straight into Marita's eyes as he spoke, and she knew that the battle had commenced.

"I prefer it with the clouds," answered Marita. "It is so easy to imagine that they are visible spirits. Their fleecy forms are suggestive of fine souls as their dark masses are of strong ones."

"I venture to say that you like the dark masses best," Mr. Channing remarked.

"Not unless they are touched with the whiteness which, to me, is typical of nobility."

"You see, Channing," said the Doctor, "Miss Burton is something of a poet."

"I wonder if she has ever gone so far as to identify any of these spirits in cloudland."

"Indeed I have," replied Marita. "I have often

seen Napoleon's cloud gathering others about it, and then sweeping across the heavens obscuring every thing else. This cloud never fades away gradually, as some of them do; it keeps on its majestic way and suddenly disappears, leaving only a gray sky."

"I don't see how you ever think of such things," said Virginia, devouring Marita with wondering eyes. "I never know there are any clouds, except when I have to carry an umbrella because it looks like rain."

Mr. Channing pulled his hat over his eyes, and stretched himself out in the bow of the boat, deigning no further remarks on the subject. Marita was well satisfied with the outcome of this skirmish, and devoted herself to the Doctor's conversation with her old-time vivacity.

Mr. Channing remained silent until the Doctor turned around, calling out:

"Hello, there, Channing! Are you asleep?"

"No," he replied, without lifting his hat or stirring. "Only dreaming."

"Day dreams are seldom realized," said the Doctor.

"This one will be." The words came in a determined voice from under the hat, and Marita looked down into the cool depths of the lake.

"I think it must be near luncheon time," ventured Virginia. "Most of the people are leaving the water."

"Which means that the Secretary of the Interior orders you to go, too, I suppose," replied her indulgent brother."

"Aren't the rest of you hungry?" asked Virginia.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" exclaimed Marita, thankful for any excuse to get out of the boat. Mr. Channing sat up and put on his hat. He made no remark, he didn't even look at Marita, yet somehow his expression made her uneasy. She thought again of the lull before the storm, and wished he wouldn't be so calm.

All the way back to the hotel and during luncheon Marita's disquietude increased. She really had no reason to be disturbed; the morning had been much easier than she had anticipated, yet the air was electrified with something which made her restless and suspicious of the apparent indifference Mr. Channing had shown.

After luncheon Marita slipped away to her room, soon forgetting her troubles in sleep. When she awoke the sun hung low, a great ball of fire lighting the heavens with the flaming farewell of daylight. Already the moon was climbing up, her silvery circle

scarcely visible in the paleness beyond the brilliant glory.

Marita lingered at the window, loth to leave so much beauty for the prosaic task of dressing; but it was growing late, and if she was to bathe before dinner, she must be stirring. Her long sleep had greatly refreshed her, and when Marita's toilet was completed the mirror reflected a white-robed figure glowing with animation. The uneasiness of the morning had vanished, and as Marita passed down the long corridor, her step was buoyant and her spirit strong.

At the foot of the stairs she encountered Mr. Channing, not yet dressed in his evening clothes.

"I'm glad I met you," he said, distantly. "I received a telegram calling me north, and I leave in about an hour."

"Indeed!"

Marita tried her best not to show the relief she felt.

"I'll bid you good-by," he said formally, "it has been a pleasure to meet you."

"Thank you," she replied, "I hope you will reach your destination safely."

"I'd like to reach it without taking the tiresome trip, but since that's impossible, I must go and prepare

for it. Good-by," Mr. Channing held out his hand, clasping the fingers Marita gave him while he looked into her eyes and said, in a husky voice: "You're intoxicating to-night." The next instant he was halfway up the stairs.

Marita's face burned all through the dinner hour, and her fingers still tingled when the evening train whistled. Later, she was very restless in the drawing-room, accepting as a welcome diversion the Doctor's proposition to go over to The Poinciana for a dance, though half inclined to remain with her father when she found that he preferred to stay at The Breakers; it required some urging from him to induce her to go with the others.

As they strolled down the palmetto path Marita thought of that other night when she had passed through here with the Doctor, while within the ballroom she was approaching there stood a man, like some eagle, ready to swoop down upon her as his prey. Marita recalled his ardent gaze following her as she danced, and dwelling upon her after they had been presented. She thought of his audacious seizure of her wrap, and seemed to hear his words again, "We shall dance together some other night." Marita was more

than thankful that the "other night" had not come. Intuition had told her that to dance with Mr. Channing would be a dangerous proceeding. To most women it would mean nothing, to her it meant close contact with a magnetism which might become overpowering. Surely, it was most fortunate that he had been called away. Now she could enjoy the evening, and then, after a long sleep, she felt sure this haunting nightmare would leave her, and she could again revel quietly in the luxury of the climate.

After dancing with the Doctor, Marita stood watching him guide Virginia through the next waltz. The music was of the kind that becomes a motive power, so completely does it enter and animate soul and body. Marita could scarcely control her feet, they were so eager to glide with those inspiring strains. Suddenly a hand was laid on her arm, and her blood seemed to freeze as she heard the words:

"This is the night we shall dance together."

For a moment Marita couldn't speak. She could only gaze, not believing that she actually saw Mr. Channing, immaculate in evening dress, his eyes brilliant with their terrifying power. He smiled, and with an effort Marita collected herself enough to say:

"Why, I thought you were far away."

"I am here," he said. His tone went through her like an electric shock. "I never meant to go. I meant to have this dance—and it's mine, isn't it?"

He bent his head; his eyes held hers; his arm drooped around her; he clasped her hand, and they glided off, close to each other. The music throbbed through the perfumed air, reaching Marita as a strain from another world. Everything seemed far away and unreal. Forgetting all that she should have remembered, Marita only knew that a potent charm controlled her. She made no effort to resist; it was too delightful to yield. As they swayed to and fro with sliding steps, a strand of hair brushed his cheek, and their lips could almost have touched, so near was his face to hers.

Then the music grew fainter, and Marita was swept outside where she dimly saw the moonlight shining through the palms. Without a word he wound his arms around her, crushing his lips down upon hers. Everything swam; the soft night enveloped their passion; he pressed his kiss closer, bending her head farther back, until, in the midst of this delirium, Marita raised her eyes in ecstasy, and saw the stars. They

shone out like beacon lights, high and clear, set in majestic vastness. As she gazed a voice came to her out of the past, saying, "Look up." With a great rush came the thought of Hamilton, of the night when they, too, had danced, and afterwards plighted their troth so sacredly. How different it had been from this —*this!* Disgust, horror, repulsion swept over her. With a supreme effort Marita wrenched herself free, trembling in every limb, yet released from the evil spell.

Channing was so surprised that he stood as if paralyzed, but Marita turned and walked rapidly back to The Poinciana.

CHAPTER XXI

MARITA slept like a child that night, so great was the peace after the storm. Serene in the consciousness that she had conquered herself, with no gnawing dread, Marita took up the threads of life in the morning, feeling only a sorrowing wonder why doubt must shadow Hamilton. He was such a vital power in her life; why couldn't she trust where she loved?

During the days that followed Mr. Channing made many advances, seeming never to weary of trying to regain his influence. All his attempts were useless, and at the end of a week he really departed, saying to Marita as he left her, "You're a wonderful woman—wonderful!"

The Doctor thought so also. It had long been his ambition to marry Marita, and surmising some trouble when Hamilton went abroad, he had gone South, hoping to win her there. Being a wideawake man, the more the Doctor saw of Marita, the better he realized that his asking would be in vain. There was some-

thing about her beyond his comprehension. He could appreciate her mental and physical development; he could give her all the love he was capable of, yet he failed to understand her, and he knew that she would never marry a man whose sympathy was incomplete. After long consideration he went away with the words unspoken, much to Marita's relief.

While she seemed to be contented, the Judge knew she was possessed by the spirit of unrest. He had observed Marita's evident desire to avoid Mr. Channing, and the Doctor, too, for that matter, since she had no ambition to number rejected hearts as Indians count scalps. Naturally, the Judge thought this aversion was due to her general distrust of humanity which was plainly evinced in many ways.

One morning, not long after the Doctor's departure, Marita started out with her father for a long walk. They avoided the customary paths through the tropical woods, branching off into the unbeaten tracks, rambling about the country, until, warm and thirsty, they stopped at a cottage to ask for water.

A young girl answered their knock.

"Ma's out washin'," she stated, "but I'll get y' a drink."

She vanished to interview the pump, and during her absence a small audience of inquisitive children gathered as near as they dared to the doorstep where the Judge and Marita were sitting.

"How old are you?" Marita asked of an impish girl with a shock of black hair and dancing eyes.

"How old is *you?*" she retorted, beaming with mischief.

"Well," said Marita, laughing, "I'm old enough to have some sense."

"I's old enough to have some fun," replied the little witch.

"I guess you know how to have it all right," said the Judge, much amused.

"Do you live here?" asked Marita.

"Yep, all of us lives here."

"Are these your brothers?"

"Reckon they are."

Here the girl returned with a pitcher of water, and the Judge and Marita drank while the children stood around, digging their bare toes into the sand in the confusion of their bashful curiosity.

"Now," said Marita, turning again to the lively girl, "tell me what you like to do best."

"Tear things," was the prompt reply.

"Why do you like to tear things?"

"I like to see 'em *go!*"

"Ruth's dreadful naughty," put in the older girl. "She tears up lots of our things."

"Does she tear up her own things, too?" asked the Judge, his eyes twinkling.

"Not unless she hates 'em."

"Ruth," said Marita, trying to look sober. "Don't you know it's very wrong to tear things?"

"Yep, I know it."

"Then why do you do it?"

"'Cause it's more fun than doin' right things."

"She's terrible bad," said her sister. "Ma gets tired lickin' her."

It was all the Judge and Marita could do to keep their faces straight.

"And how about the boys," Marita inquired, turning to the two little shavers in ragged trousers.

"We're all right," replied the eldest, with an air of importance.

"Masculine superiority," said Marita, smiling at the Judge.

"They don't tear things," Ruth was quick to say, "they only steal what goodies we have."

The boys looked rather shamefaced; finally the little fellow plucked up courage to say, "We wouldn't get our share if we didn't hook 'em when we got a chance." By the gleam in the taller boy's eye Marita judged that he'd like the chance to "hook 'em" oftener than he got it.

After a short rest the Judge dispensed coins among the children with his usual generosity, leaving them overwhelmed with the sense of riches possessed.

"I wonder," said Marita to her father as they wended their way back to The Breakers, "what kind of men and women those children will make when they grow up."

"Probably as good as the average," replied the Judge.

"Which is decidedly low."

"Oh, no. The average human being is a fairly good sort of a creature."

"Do you really think so, father?"

"Of course I do. Why, my dear girl, what do you think of those poor women whose husbands are lodged in jail, who take up the burden of supporting a family,

who love and encourage and help their prisoners so much that they sometimes redeem them?"

"I think the goodness of those women offsets the badness of those men, and still leaves your average low."

"Marita," said the Judge, gently yet firmly, "I don't like your point of view. It is a new one for you, and it grieves me to see it growing upon you."

"I don't like it any better than you do, father, but I can't seem to see things as I used to. My faith in humanity has been shaken to the roots, and it's very hard to trust again. A man like Grant Hamilton can mean so much to a girl. He represents all that is best in life, and when the representation is so disappointing, it's quite natural to doubt that which is represented."

"True, my dear," said the Judge sadly. Then, with an appeal in his voice, he continued: "And yet, I've been hoping all along that my girl would soon right herself with the world."

"Your girl has tried, but she's a very human girl, and she hasn't been able to right herself yet."

"Well, honey, keep on trying, and bank on your old father when you need help."

"I don't know what I'd do if it wasn't for you," returned Marita, her great love for her father shining out of the eyes aching with unshed tears.

The Judge wondered if he could ever disclose that which might cause those eyes to turn from him rather than to him. He despised himself for not clearing Hamilton, yet the thought of doing so at the risk of losing Marita's respect was the cause of many a sleepless hour. If the knowledge of her irregular birth would in any way promote Marita's happiness, the Judge would have gladly sacrificed his personal feeling; thinking that such knowledge would only increase her burden, and not being sure of the wisest course to follow, he remained silent, continuing to wonder and question. Truly, Marita was not the only one battling with self through the long, sunny days in the south.

CHAPTER XXII

THE trees at Lindenhurst had burst out into their spring freshness, and lived through their summer glory; they were glowing with autumn tints when gentle Mrs. Burton passed into the great unknown. As she had lived, so she died, quietly, peacefully, leaving her dear ones a beautiful memory unmarred by any struggle.

Marita feared that this loss would affect her father's health, which had been unusually good since their return from the South. As time passed, however, she saw that his grief was not a destroying anguish; it was an abiding sorrow, purifying rather than blighting. Perhaps this influence had something to do with the feeling which was growing upon the Judge—the feeling that something must be done to clear Marita's horizon of the clouds of doubt which did not disperse as he had hoped. All his efforts to reëstablish her faith in mankind were unavailing; she believed in nothing and no one.

One evening they were sitting in the library watch-

ing the big logs give their woodland life to the flames.

"Marita, dear, you forgot to draw the shades," said the Judge, who never liked to think that outsiders could look in upon the privacy of his hearth.

Rising at once, Marita went to the nearest window; instead of drawing the shade, she stood a moment, gazing wistfully out into the frosty October night. The wind that rattled the wistaria branches against the glass had swept every cloud from the sky, leaving undimmed the autumn brilliancy of myriad stars. Marita looked up, wondering where Hamilton was tonight, and if he was thinking of her. Why did he stay over there so long—or perhaps he was home, she didn't know. Would she ever know, would she ever hear from him, ever see him again?

The Judge heard her sigh as she pulled down the shade; guessing that her thoughts were with Hamilton, his heart ached as it never had when death entered his home.

"My God," he thought, bowing his head, "if men only knew what the harvest is when the wild oats are ripe!"

"I'm going to pile up these cushions and sit at

your feet," said Marita, suiting the action to the word.

"Dear child," the Judge's voice trembled as he rested his hand on her head, "are you lonely to-night?"

"I am never lonely when I have you, father; yet there must always be a void—for both of us, now."

"The void in my life is not like yours. My wife seems only to have gone into the next room and closed the door; when the door is opened to me, I shall find her there."

"I'm glad you feel that way, father; it is so beautiful."

"Don't you feel the same way, dear?"

"No," Marita answered, regretfully, "I don't. If life can be such a shallow thing here, why should it be continued hereafter?"

"Marita," said the Judge, suddenly bending forward and looking straight into her eyes, "what if you knew that Hamilton was blameless?"

"What if I knew he was blameless?" She caught her breath. "Oh, father, if I could know *that*, all this dreadful weight would roll away."

The Judge shut his teeth hard.

"Hamilton *is* blameless."

Marita's whole frame stiffened, every fibre strained with intensity.

"Do you mean that?"

The Judge scarce heard her words; he only heard the unnatural tone of her voice. It pierced his heart like a knife; his lifeblood seemed to ooze through the wound.

"Do you mean it?" she repeated vehemently.

"I do, Marita; I mean it."

The Judge's lips grew whiter with every word.

Marita sprang to her feet

"You mean it! You mean that Hamilton is blameless; and you have let me go on thinking him unworthy. You have seen my life poisoned by doubt, and have never spoken. Father, why have you done this thing? Why didn't you speak long ago?"

The Judge rose and stood before Marita with folded arms. Her torrent of reproach was checked by his sorrowful dignity.

"Before you censure me for my silence, think what it has been for your father to watch the venom corroding your life. Do you think it has been easy to see you lose all your ideals, all your hopes, all your faith?

Hasn't some powerful reason restrained me from speaking, when I saw the ruin being wrought? God is my witness that I've remained silent for your own good. I did not speak because I thought it better for you to doubt Hamilton than to know what you must know—now." His voice sank to a whisper, then rose again clear and firm. "I thought you would outgrow the bitterness, but you did not; I thought your faith would be restored, and it was not. I have seen the cloud spread until your horizon is completely darkened; I can bear it no longer. You must know that the man you love is above reproach. Why, child, his refusal to explain the words of my delirium was one of the noblest things a man ever did."

"Yes, yes," cried Marita, her eyes glittering with excitement. "Go on; tell me more!"

"By his silence he shielded you at the cost of condemning himself."

"Shielded me?"

"Yes, from the truth that lay at the root of the delirious words I spoke; from the truth that has cursed my life for years; from the truth that will curse your life from this hour—the truth that your only name is Marita."

An occasional snap of the fire was all that broke the stillness. The Judge waited, his heart leaping with suffocating bounds, great beads of perspiration breaking out on his forehead as he watched the girl who seemed turned to stone. Marita looked straight ahead with eyes that saw nothing. Her arms hung nervelessly, her hands were stiff with cold. No word came, no cry; there was just that white, mute anguish, telling better than words how well she understood. She was only Marita; she had no other name. So many things she didn't understand, but that was plain. No name, no place in the world; everybody would shun her if they knew. Yet Hamilton knew, and he had not shunned her. How was it? How did he know? Her father must have told him—her father! He was the author of it all; he had ruined her life; placed love beyond her reach; shut the doors of happiness in her face; closed every path that a woman longs to tread. A wave of bitterness swept over the girl, and then through the gall she saw the drawn features before her. As if a great light had been flashed upon them, the suffering of a lifetime was revealed. Something keen broke her icy bonds; with a quick step she threw her arms around her father's neck, sobbing out:

"Oh, father—my father."

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"Oh, father—my father!"

That yearning cry was the sweetest sound the Judge had ever heard. Fraught with unswerving love, it banished his fear of estrangement, and though it wrung the tears from his aching eyes, yet even as they fell a great peace stole into his heart.

CHAPTER XXIII

FAR into the night their voices rose and fell. The Judge was determined that nothing should be unknown to Marita now. He went back to the time of his youthful folly, telling her of Anita Mondello and the burning days in Rome. When he told of how he returned there after his marriage and found his nameless baby girl lying in the sunlight, then Marita stopped his words with a kiss, and the Judge thanked God he had found her.

He spoke humbly of his sin and reverently of his wife's pardon. There was no need of explaining how remorse had shadowed the joy of watching his daughter grow from childhood to girlhood, from girlhood to womanhood; she knew that by the God-given power men call intuition. Yet he told it all, and she listened, nestling beside him in the big armchair, growing restless only when the Judge spoke of his interview with Hamilton. Then the color stole back to her lips, her eyes shone, and the strained tone of agitation sounded in her voice as she said:

"Now, father, tell me all that passed between you."

"You shall know everything, dear; there must be no more concealments. Hamilton asked for my daughter, and I told him why I couldn't consent to the marriage." Marita shivered a little, and the Judge's hand tightened over hers. "At first he was stunned, as you were; after a little he regained his poise and spoke as few men would speak. He said that character was more to him than birth; that he believed in you, and wanted to marry you just the same." Marita closed her eyes. She could not bear to have even her father see all that might be shining there. "He plead so well that I finally yielded, with the understanding that he was never to tell you the secret of your birth."

"Then he was bound by his word to you not to speak?"

"Yes, but few men would have kept their word, as he did, under such circumstances."

Marita's mind ached with the pain of her thoughts. "How my unjust reproaches must have hurt! How my words must have tortured him! I was so cruel, and he sacrificed himself for me."

"Comfort yourself by thinking that your firmness under existing conditions must have strengthened his belief in you."

"Oh, I hope it did—I hope so!"

"Marita," said the Judge, studying her closely from under his shaggy eyebrows, "could anything induce you to marry Hamilton now?"

Marita shook her head slowly, a shadowy smile saddening her lips as she said:

"Marriage is not for me."

"I thought you would feel that way, and being sure that my revelation would not promote your happiness, I decided to let you think Hamilton unworthy. It was a cowardly decision, I know, but I thought it would be easier for you, and I fear I would do more than sacrifice honor to win peace for my child."

Marita pressed her face close to her father's, and held it there in silence. After a pause she asked: "Was it my horrid pessimism that finally led you to speak?"

"Yes, dear; I could not bear to see you slip any further into the mire of unbelief."

"Father, I never can tell you how thankful I am that you told me!"

"Are you really?"

"Oh, yes! It was so dreadful to think of Grant as a fallen idol."

"I know, I know; but I fear you don't realize the weight of this new burden."

"I think I do," she said thoughtfully. "It is a burden crushing love and marriage and much that is beautiful out of my life. Yet it is easier to lose them for my unworthiness than for his."

"There's the wrench of the pang—you are not unworthy."

"Perhaps not unworthy, rather unfit. However that may be, I'm on my feet again. I know that Grant is what I thought him, and that knowledge has taken all the sting out of this other trial. I don't believe you men understand what it means to a woman to lose faith in a man she loves. You see, he personifies nobility, and when he seems false, then nothing seems true."

"You say you're on your feet again, and God only knows how glad I am to hear you say so. There have been many fears haunting me, but none more dreadful than the fear that the knowledge of your father's sin would be as great a cloud as the thought of Hamil-

ton's failing, and you would also have this wretched secret to bear."

"Just let that fear go forever."

"Tell me how you feel about it."

"Why, father, your sin was so human. I can understand it"—as Marita looked into the fire the logs seemed to rise out of the embers, and the burnt ends became widespread palms bathed in moonlight—"and I can pardon it. I would have forgiven Grant such a sin as that; indeed, I would have forgiven him almost any sin. The thing I could not forgive was his refusal to confide to me anything so important that you thought I wouldn't marry him if I knew."

"Oh," sighed the Judge, wearily leaning back "it was all such a miserable mistake. 'Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children,' that, dear, is the thing that wrings my heart. The acme of penance is reached when you must see a loved one suffer for your own sin."

"I'm not going to suffer," said Marita bravely, though her lip quivered. "It has all been told and forgiven and everything straightened out. We have each other—and work."

"What work?"

"Oh, I don't know; I haven't thought as far as that; only, somehow, it seems as if work would be such a help."

"Don't think about anything now, you're worn out; you must rest, dear child." The Judge folded her close in his arms, feeling that the new bond had united their hearts in a very precious way.

Slowly they mounted the stairs, side by side. When they stopped at Marita's door the Judge took her face between his hands, searching the deep brown eyes, and saying hungrily:

"So you really can forgive me."

"Yes, father."

"And you love me, dear?"

"Oh, so much!"

He touched his lips to her forehead, and then spoke hesitatingly:

"Marita, shall you—let Hamilton know—that you know?"

A distressed look shaded her face.

"Let's not talk about that to-night," she said wearily. "There are so many things to think of."

CHAPTER XXIV

NOTHING is harder than the adjustment of life after one has received a vital blow. Strength comes with the hour of trial, the days and weeks that follow are the true test of courage. When a soul is tried as Marita's was, there are times when the spirit rebels, growing desperate under its weight. Again, it becomes overwhelmed with sadness, paralyzed by the apparent uselessness of the struggle. After it has passed through the gorge of despair—after it has risen above the vale of despondency—after it has reached the heights of serenity—then it has gathered unto itself the hope that is born of conquering self.

At first it seemed to Marita that life was a desert, her father's love the only oasis in all its dreariness; as the days crept along she began to see beauty in the stretch of sand, and at last a definite form arose in the lightening horizon.

With this definite form in full view, Marita approached the Judge in the library on a sunny morning early in November.

"Father, dear, I want your close attention."

"You always have that," he said, smiling fondly at the girl whose bravery was to him a never-ending source of wonder.

"I have been thinking about the future, and I know what I want to do."

"Tell me about it," he said, his lively interest a little tinged with anxiety.

"You see, father, under the circumstances I cannot live on like this. The things that fill the lives of other women are not for me, yet I must have something. I have thought and thought until I am dizzy with thinking, and it seems to me there is only one thing to do, and that is to work. I need work more than the woman who must earn her bread. It means nothing less than salvation to me. Don't you understand?"

"Yes," said the Judge slowly, "I understand; but, my dear, what work can you do?"

"Can't you guess?" cried Marita, and taking a step towards the piano, she held up her violin.

"What, music?"

"Yes, music; teaching and playing."

"Playing where?" The Judge looked sober.

"Oh, in churches, at concerts, receptions—any-

where. Now take that worried pucker right out of your forehead, because I've thought it all out very carefully, and I'm sure it's the best thing to do. We'll close Lindenhurst for the winter and go to New York, where we'll have a cosy apartment together. You're ready to retire from active work anyway, and you'll revel in books while I'm growing famous."

"My dear child, I don't mind going to New York for the winter, or any other place you may choose; the only thing I object to is your becoming a public artist. It's a slave's life, and you'd be subjected to all kinds of unpleasantness."

"Why don't you say temptations? You know that's what you mean. Between us, father, there's no use in calling a spade an agricultural implement. I know how you feel about such a career, yet it's the only thing that would fill my life as it must be filled. The path is hard, that is why I long to follow it; there are many temptations by the way, but I'm not afraid to face them. Can't you trust me, father, to overcome such things?"

"You don't know what temptation is, Marita."

She smiled as she said: "I don't know what temptation is? Listen, father. Do you remember Mr.

Channing—at Palm Beach? Well, that man stirred every drop of Italian blood in my veins. I despised him; yet he fascinated me, attracted me irresistibly. I was like a boat swept along by the tide, until the mad course was stopped by a rock against which the current dashed in vain. Do you know what the rock was? It was the thought of Grant Hamilton—the realization of the difference between his love and the other man's passion. That was when I thought him lacking, too. Now that I know of his self-suppression, of his belief in me and his willingness to marry me, do you think any power on earth could lead me astray? Why, father, I'm hedged in, protected, guarded by the great, true love of that man. Whatever my nature may be, Grant knew it, and he trusted me entirely. Can't you do as much?"

The Judge looked at Marita with an expression such as illumines the face of a devout Catholic kneeling before the Virgin.

"God knows I don't deserve such a daughter. Follow any course you choose; I'll stand by my girl in everything she undertakes."

"I was sure you would," said Marita delightedly, "and you can't think how much an active life will

mean to me. I can scarcely wait for the time to come, and, of course, the sooner we go the better—professionally, I mean."

It was a long time since the Judge had seen Marita's eyes twinkle like that.

"Yes, dear," he answered, "the sooner we go the better."

"I'm so glad you think as I do," she replied, playfully; her face sobered, however, as she continued: "I wonder if you'll agree with me about another matter. You asked me once if I should let Grant know that I knew. I've thought it all over, and have finally concluded to let matters rest as they are. Perhaps time has healed his wound, and it would only be a useless tearing open. Through a sense of obligation or through his own desire, he would probably urge marriage, which is utterly impossible. It would be a struggle for both of us, painful and unavailing. Don't you think it is best to say nothing?"

"Possibly, I don't know. That is something you must decide for yourself."

"Then I shall not tell him," said Marita promptly. "I shall only think of him as a strong, helpful force in my life. His memory will not be a troublous

shadow; it shall be a beautiful light softening the barre sinister on my shield."

"What do you know of the barre sinister?" asked the Judge, regarding her with surprise.

"I know it is the barre which heraldry gives to such as I am. I adopt it without shame, accepting it as a constant reminder that I am pitted against the world, and can only conquer by exerting every power I have."

"Come here," said the Judge, his eyes beaming with pride, "I want to shake hands with you."

CHAPTER XXV

"MR. TRUMAN is busy this afternoon, and begs to be excused."

If Marita had any heart at all, it was way down in the box toes of her walking boots. This was the third time she had been politely turned out of the manager's office, and so much depended upon an interview with Mr. Truman that these repeated disappointments severely tried her courage. She felt like going home to indulge in a good hard cry, but instead of doing so, when she reached the elevator, Marita turned and went back to the office. Taking out one of her cards, she wrote upon it, "Will Mr. Truman kindly appoint a time when Miss Burton may talk business with him?" The liveried office boy took the card with the superior air which the servants of those in power often assume towards applicants. Slight as it was, the circumstance nettled Marita, making her all the more determined to secure an audience with that manager.

The boy soon returned, saying in a condescending tone:

"Mr. Truman may have time to see you to-morrow morning; he couldn't appoint any hour."

"Very well," said Marita, leaving the room with a vague impression that gilt-buttoned youths are masters of fate.

Marita walked rapidly down Broadway, her nostrils dilating like those of a thoroughbred scenting powder. "Evidently Mr. Truman is a man with whom you must use strong measures," she thought, "and since he is the only manager who can give me just the engagements I want, I propose to use them."

Everything seemed to be against Marita the next morning. The rain poured down as if the sluices of heaven were opened for the occasion. This was particularly annoying, since it necessitated the wearing of a rainy-day suit in place of an extremely becoming tailor gown. Marita knew that personal appearance goes a long way with managers, and naturally wished to look her very best.

"Who says that circumstance doesn't rule fortune!" she exclaimed, impatiently snapping the fastenings on her short skirt. "I say it does! Look at me, obliged to tramp into Truman's august presence in this abbreviated costume, when I might sweep in ma-

jestically with that lovely castor gown, all because of the weather—nothing but circumstance! Why, that other suit might just tip the scale the right way," and Marita pulled on her eton jacket, trying to console herself with the thought that at least it was very well cut.

Armed with umbrella and violin, she set out on her watery way, reaching the manager's office in no amiable frame of mind. Her reception did not tend to raise her spirits, the gilt-buttoned arbiter of fate informing her that Mr. Truman was too busy to see her then; she could wait if she chose. She did choose, settling herself in a chair by the window, determined to wait all day if necessary. It was a dreary outlook; even the entertainment of watching the people pass was denied to Marita, since from the third story window she could see only dripping umbrellas in the street below.

Slowly the hours passed. A few men and two messenger boys came into the office, executed their errands, and hurried out. They all stared at Marita; even the lordly office boy began to regard her as a curiosity worthy of an occasional sidelong glance.

Suddenly the door marked "Private" flew open,

and a big, heavy-mustached man appeared with his storm coat buttoned and hat in hand. He laid a roll of papers on the boy's desk, casting an inquiring glance in Marita's direction.

"Now's the time to strike," she thought, and with shaking knees she arose. "I beg your pardon, is this Mr. Truman?"

"Yes." His keen eye scanned her from hat to boot, and oh, how she longed for the castor gown!

"I am Miss Burton," she continued. "I've been waiting a long time to see you."

"I should think so," he replied, the suspicion of a smile lurking in the corners of his mouth. "I had no idea you would wait like this. Just step inside, and I'll see you before I go out."

Ushering Marita into his room, Mr Truman laid down his hat and seated himself, without removing his storm coat, however.

"I'm sorry to detain you," said Marita, feeling that the situation was most inauspicious.

"What did you want to see me about?" asked Mr. Truman, in a tone which plainly told how bored he was.

"About making engagements for me to play at concerts and social affairs."

"My dear young lady, don't you know that I only book stars?"

"That's the reason I came to you."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Truman with an aggravating smile, "I don't recall any of your triumphs."

"Because I never had any. I mean to begin with one, and I want you to help me. I only ask one thing, let me play for you."

"You can't play here there's no piano."

"I *can* play here, my violin is in the outer office."

Before he could remonstrate Marita was into the other room and back again with her violin.

"Well, you came prepared," he said, rather amused at the way she proceeded.

"It was all I could do, since I had no triumphs for you to recall," and taking up her violin, Marita drew forth the first notes of the music which would make or mar her future. Never in her life had she felt less sure of herself; she was disheartened, her courage was nearly exhausted, and she knew that her audience was not only critical, but predisposed against her. Summoning all the strength she had left, Marita swept at once into a brilliant movement. She need not have feared for herself; as usual, music broke the shackles

and set her free. It was as if her spirit defied fate and rose victorious by the might of its own power. If ever genius spoke from a soul through an instrument, it did when Marita filled that dingy office with music such as Truman, with all his experience, had seldom heard. He could scarcely wait for her to stop playing, and the last note had barely left the strings when he sprang up and held out his hand, crying:

"By Jove, I'm glad you came to me!"

Marita dropped into the nearest chair, unable to stand. Mr. Truman threw aside his storm coat, and began talking business at once. Somewhat later, when she rose to go, arrangements had been made for Marita to play at a Sunday night concert in the Metropolitan Opera House.

"I think that will give you an opportunity to begin with a triumph," said Truman, smiling kindly.

"I hope so," replied Marita, bidding him good-by, and starting off with a longing to skip instead of walk.

As she opened her umbrella and stepped out into the rain, Marita smiled happily, saying to herself: "Circumstance didn't rule fortune this time!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE crucial hour had come. Marita stood upon the stage, a great audience waiting for her music. She was perfectly calm and self-possessed. The sea of faces represented only a mass of humanity for her to sway; no individuality distracted her attention. Her father was there with the Chesters, but Marita had purposely avoided knowing the location of their box. She realized that every personal thought must be banished, that triumph would only come with complete abandon to music.

As Marita raised her violin, she turned her head to the right, and there, in a box near the stage, sat Mr. Channing. He was gazing at her with a look that stung like a poisoned arrow. She knew that the success of the woman who had baffled his advances was the last thing he would care to witness, and though she had no thought of failing, still her hand seemed weighted, and it was with difficulty that she remembered what she was to play. The curse of the artist had fallen upon Marita; she was self-conscious. She played with

magnificent technique, and no more soul than a pianola. Her success and not her art was uppermost in her mind. The listeners admired her skill, but not a single heart was touched. The applause that greeted her was such as might be given to a fairly good pianist.

Marita left the stage, knowing that the music had meant nothing to her, fearing it had meant nothing to others. One look at Mr. Truman's face told her the truth.

"I have failed!" she gasped.

"Well, it wasn't exactly a triumph," he said, his expression not pleasant to see.

The time that intervened between that awful moment and her next selection was almost a blank to Marita. She sat motionless, every thought and feeling so numb that the call-boy had to speak to her twice. When she realized that she must go on the stage again, must face an audience prepared to tolerate her music, it seemed too great a trial to be borne. She rose from her seat, trembling in every limb. No one spoke to her as she passed, not even Mr. Truman.

Once more she appeared on the scene of her failure. Mr. Channing was leaning forward, his face full of cold satisfaction. That expression burnt through Ma-

rita's numbness. She hastened to the front of the stage, and without any pause or even inclination of the head, she dashed into such an outburst of music that the great auditorium fairly rang. Making no attempt to render the selection on the programme, Marita launched herself on a wave of music, letting it bear her whither it would. With majestic roll it swept her beyond the limits of self, out into the inspired realm where pride and ambition are as vapors. She played without thought of time or place, swaying every heart under the roof. Forgetting the musician in the music, each listener drifted on the sea of his own imagination, pausing under the beacon lights of the past or carried on to those of the future.

At last the bow ceased to move, the magic strings were hushed. A moment of breathless silence ensued; no one cared to break the spell.

Marita was conscious of leaving the glare of the footlights with an increasing roar in her ears. By the time she had reached the wings, the house thundered with applause. All the artists gathered around her with congratulations, and Mr. Truman nearly shook off her hand while he exclaimed enthusiastically:

"You've done it this time; you've done it."

"Have I?" said Marita, half dazed with it all.

"I should think you had! Just listen to that!" he cried, waving his hand in the direction of the deafening noise. "Go on again; you'll have to show yourself."

Marita acknowledged the ovation several times, and still the great throng clamored.

"What shall I do?" she asked of Mr. Truman. "They won't stop."

"I'll settle it for you," he said, and going out on the stage he explained to the audience that though their appreciation was overwhelming, the rule of no encores must be observed.

"Break the rule," called some one.

"Encore!" cried some one else, and the word echoed from every part of the house.

"This beats me," said Truman, as he went behind the scenes, his face flushed with excitement. "I guess you'll have to give an encore."

"I'm willing," said Marita, and taking up her violin with an ecstatic feeling of adoration for it, she stepped out, smiling radiantly. Involuntarily her glance sought Mr. Channing's box. She wondered how he would look now, but he was gone.

This time the music was a great thanksgiving, so sweet and full of grace. It soothed and strengthened many a world-worn heart, leaving the sense of a blessing hovering near.

The last note was still echoing when an exquisite cluster of orchids fell at Marita's feet. She glanced up quickly. Mr. Channing stood in the front of his box watching her intently. Regardless of rules and propriety, thinking of nothing but the necessity of showing him at once that the artist was as far beyond his attentions as the woman had been, Marita set her foot on the costly flowers, and lifting her bow played the "Ave Maria" as no one there had ever heard it played before.

CHAPTER XXVII

"WELL," said Lawrence Chester, toasting his back before the drawing-room fire while he and his wife awaited their dinner guests, "are you satisfied with Marita's season?"

"Indeed I am," replied Mrs. Chester, emphatically. "She's surpassed all artists, won the critics, and captivated society. What more could one ask?"

"Do you think she's happy?"

"Now, why do you ask that? You know she delights in her work."

"Work isn't everything to a woman, and sometimes I've thought that a wistful look, not indicative of happiness, was settling on Marita's face."

"Have you noticed that, too," said Mrs. Chester, anxiously. "I hoped it was only my fancy. To be perfectly frank, I don't understand Marita, I never did, and I doubt if any one does. She's a puzzle to everybody."

Chester studied the pattern of the Persian rug he was standing on. Suddenly he looked up from the intricate figures:

"Did you ever find out why she took the name of Anita Mondello?"

"No, I haven't yet had the courage to ask her."

"Such a queer name for her to select," he said, meditatively.

"Marita's always doing odd things. She was different from other girls at Vassar, and she's been different ever since."

"I wonder why she's never married?" mused Chester, studying the rug again.

"Surely not for lack of offers. Possibly—" Mrs. Chester broke off in the aggravating way some women have.

"Well—what?" demanded Chester, lifting his eyes with a slight frown.

"I used to think that perhaps—Grant Hamilton."

Chester gave vent to a long, low whistle. "The wind sets that way, does it? By Jove, what a couple they'd make!"

"Wouldn't they, though? And don't you remember how devoted he was at our house party last year?"

"Indeed, I do; that was when I told her she belonged to the aristocracy of genius."

"And so she does. Shall you ever forget her first night?"

"Never," said Chester forcibly, and before him rose a picture of the tall, white-robed woman thrilling the multitude with every bend of her bow. "And I've never forgotten the way she crushed those orchids."

"Nobody else would have done such a thing, but as I said before, Marita never does act like other people."

"I'll wager the man of the orchids has never bothered her since," and Chester chuckled with satisfaction.

"I guess not," said Mrs. Chester, in her most decided manner. "He's only one of many, though. She's often greatly annoyed. Why, yesterday afternoon I stopped for her on my way up to Mrs. Schuyler's reception. While she was rolling up her music the maid brought in a package from Tiffany's. Marita's lip curled as she took it. 'Now, I wonder if that's more bait,' she said. 'More what?' I asked. 'Bait,' she answered. 'That's what I call the jewels I receive.' 'You don't mean—' I began. 'Yes, I do,' she interrupted. 'Open that package yourself. It needs no explanation.' I broke the seals, and inside the case

was a costly diamond star. A well-known clubman had sent it, enclosing a note, of course. I was furious. I stormed around there, abusing that man and all men in general, except you," with an arch glance. "Marita took it very calmly. While I was fuming, she did up the package again, directing it to that villain. 'It used to disturb me,' she said patiently. 'Now I'm used to such things. I suppose one can become accustomed to almost anything, even insults.' Lawrence, my heart aches yet when I think of the way she looked as she spoke."

"It's a beastly shame!" cried Chester, bristling with indignation. "She's too attractive a woman to be in public life anyway. If Hamilton cares for Marita, why in the name of common sense doesn't he come home?"

The words were still on his lips when the butler entered, announcing Judge and Miss Burton.

"I believe she's grown taller," thought Chester, watching Marita as she came down the long room. "Or is it only the queenly lift of her head that makes her seem so? She's so self-reliant, yet I never knew a woman who appealed more strongly to a man's protective instinct."

Chester sighed a little as he stepped forward to greet Marita, observing that the wistful look was becoming strongly marked.

On the same evening, while the Judge and Marita were enjoying the hospitality of the Chesters, far across the sea Hamilton was dining at The Carlton, in London. He had just returned from an extended trip through Egypt, and one of his first thoughts was that now he could get the home news. Having dressed for dinner, he left his chamber, intending to get a Paris "Herald" to read while he waited in the anteroom for a vacant table in that busiest of eating places, the grill-room. Hamilton knew he'd have to wait; he had been at The Carlton before. Passing down the long corridor, he met an eminent English barrister with whom he was well acquainted. Being urged to join Lyndsay's party in the restaurant, Hamilton accepted the invitation, thinking that dining with friends in the brilliant restaurant would be much pleasanter than eating alone in the grill-room.

It was long since Hamilton had seen anything like home, and as he sat down among the distinguished men in familiar dress suits, and women resplendent with jewels, he was glad to be in the mother-country again.

"I'm tired of knocking about," thought Hamilton, not listening to the conversation. "I've about reached the conclusion that when you've a thorn in your side, the hurt isn't eased by hopping around. I wonder how it would have been if I'd stayed in the traces at home? It seemed beyond human endurance; it *was* beyond me."

Here some one addressed a remark to Hamilton, interrupting his retrospections. Fortunately, he was able to reply intelligently, but during the remainder of the dinner he wisely gave his attention to his companions. By the time coffee had been served in the palm-room the hour was late, and Hamilton bade his friends good-night; yet before going upstairs he stopped to inquire of the newsboy if he had a Paris "Herald" left. Tired as he was, he couldn't sleep until he had looked up affairs in America. Dropping down on a settee near the lift he read the political news; then, turning to the page devoted to social, dramatic, and musical notes, his attention was drawn to an article headed "The New Star." Always interested in high art of any kind, Hamilton folded over the paper and began to read. Suddenly his heart gave a great leap. He was choked, breathless, dizzy. The lines of print

waved up and down, yet those words stood out as if stamped in red, "The wonderful violinist, Anita Mondello." For some minutes he clutched the pages, mutely staring at the words so freighted with meaning. At last he lowered the paper, gazing down the hall wonderingly. Where was he, anyway? A much bewigged flunkey passed before him. Oh, the Carlton —London—yes, certainly. What had happened? Something had burst upon him and dazed him. He was reading—yes; what did he read—words—a name—that was it! A name. Hamilton raised the paper again; there it was—Anita Mondello—*Marita!* Confusion vanished now, everything was clear. He didn't need to reason it out; he knew in an instant why Marita had taken her mother's name, and why she had chosen a public career. No hesitation now; he was already on his feet, repeating thankfully, "She knows, she knows it all!"

Going straight to the office Hamilton leaned over the desk, saying to the clerk, "Tell me, when does the first steamer sail for New York?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE homeward trip was a period of torture for Hamilton. Those eight days of deck-pacing seemed interminable; as for the nights, they were restless ages. When he could distinguish the outline of New York harbor he almost shouted, and as they drew nearer he did take off his hat.

Hamilton landed at ten o'clock in the morning, and rushing his luggage through the Custom House, reached home in time to lunch with his mother. He spent the afternoon with her, recounting his travels and experiences; then, after dressing carefully, he went down to the Union League Club to dine.

Though Hamilton thoroughly searched all the newspapers, he failed to find any announcement concerning Anita Mondello. Of course it was late in the season, the first of May; but still, he had hoped to find a notice. Well, perhaps it was better so, he would see her at home.

Purposely selecting a quiet corner, Hamilton sat down with his back to the other tables. He didn't

want a crowd of the boys around him to-night; he preferred to dine undisturbed. He had chosen an attractive place, though, and the table next to his was soon occupied. Four men were sitting there, and being so near, Hamilton couldn't help hearing their conversation.

As the dinner progressed, one of his neighbors asked, "Does any one know where Mondello plays to-night?"

Hamilton strained his ears now.

"She doesn't play," answered one of the men. "It's too late in the season for stars to appear."

"Tell me about her. I've been away so long that I don't know what's going on in town."

The tone of this last voice was peculiar. Hamilton turned his head, and saw a man whose most striking characteristic was the magnetism apparent in every line of his face.

"Why, Mondello has been the musical sensation of the year. She dropped down on us from heaven knows where, and carried New York by a large majority. Truman launched her; nobody knows where he found her. She's been the one necessary feature of all the swell entertainments."

"What's the reason of her success?" asked the man of magnetic power.

"A combination of genius, personality, and mystery."

"Mystery?"

"Yes; no one seems to know anything about her, and nothing can be discovered."

"Indeed!"

"The boys call her 'The Impossible.' She seems to be absolutely invulnerable. Not a man in town has won even the privilege of calling upon her. To each and every one she turns a deaf ear. Then, too, she's unique, decidedly so."

"Scorched a little yourself," thought Hamilton, longing to strangle the man.

"Just what do you mean?" asked one of the party.

"Well, for one thing, Mondello sends all her floral offerings to the hospitals; not many stars do that. Then, she's never been known to answer a note, and jewels are returned the same day they're sent."

"More than scorched, burnt," decided Hamilton, wrathfully gritting his teeth.

"Speaking from experience?" some one asked.

"Never mind whether I am or not. One thing I

will say, though, I'd like to see the man who can win any favors from that woman!"

"So would I!" exclaimed the man whom Hamilton had noticed. "I knew her before she began her career."

"You did?" inquired the man who had said so much, listening with interest.

Channing, for it was he, nodded, fingering an empty wine glass as he spoke. "Before I went away I happened to witness her triumph at the Metropolitan, recognizing in the violinist a Miss Burton whom I met at Palm Beach last winter. She's a very attractive woman with a stunning-looking father, who seems to be the only person she really cares for, so far as I could find out."

"Well, Channing, if *you* found her impossible, it's no wonder the rest of us failed."

"I'm willing to own she was too much for me. I tried to win her favor, tried hard, and I thought I'd almost succeeded; but something held the girl back, and she turned me down so completely that I was glad enough to leave her."

"She's an adept at turning people down; more than one New Yorker knows that."

"I've been wondering why she chose an Italian name," said Channing, curiously.

"If you find out anything about that woman you'll be doing well. Mondello is absolutely inaccessible herself, and Truman's lips are glued together when your questions concern his favorite star. As for the name, I suppose it's only a freak; most women take fancy names when they enter public life."

"Whatever the name may be, she's no freak; I never saw handsomer shoulders."

"I'd like to see them veiled with that beautiful hair of hers."

This was more than Hamilton could bear. He rose hastily, to the astonishment of the waiter, who wondered why such a healthy-looking man should send away plate after plate untouched.

Walking hurriedly out of the dining-room, Hamilton went at once to the directory and searched for Truman's address. He found it, and calling a hansom, was soon on his way to Seventy-second Street. Seldom had Hamilton been so stirred by conflicting emotions—one moment full of anger, the next exultant. Baring his head to the warm night air of spring,

Hamilton braced himself against the broadcloth cushions, thinking :

"How dared those men speak of her like that! Infamous! The scoundrels ought to be thrashed. Nothing would suit me better than to horsewhip every one of them. Talking of Marita—*Marita*—in that way! Poor girl, how she has been heaped with trials; and hasn't she borne them just as I knew she would. If ever a woman proved herself, Marita has. Dear heart, I know how you must have suffered, how the struggle has wrenched your heart. It would be like you to hide all your anguish, too. I don't believe even your father knows how hard it has been. Yet, knowing yourself nameless, and thinking that joy was crushed out of your life, you took up this work; you met these temptations, you conquered the world and yourself! It was a brave thing to do, and not one woman in a thousand could have done it. Oh, my love, I am so proud of you; and to think that men should speak of you as those villains did to-night!" Hamilton sat up straighter and jammed his hat down on his head. "I don't know how I kept my temper. It's a wonder I knew enough to get out when they began discussing Marita's fine points as they would those of a horse.

The rottenness in this world is enough to sicken a man, were it not balanced by sterling worth, like Marita's. Oh, *isn't* she made of good stuff! Confound that horse, it's the slowest beast on the avenue."

When Hamilton reached Mr. Truman's residence, he lost no time in sending up his card. In his present frame of mind waiting was intolerable, and he was truly grateful for Truman's prompt appearance. Giving him a rapid, gauging glance, Hamilton introduced himself and then explained his errand.

"I'm an old friend of Judge Burton's," he said, "and having just returned from Europe, I do not know his address. I understand his daughter has been starring under your management this winter, and I thought you could tell me where to find them."

"I'd be very glad to oblige you, Mr. Hamilton, but I'm under the strictest orders not to give their address to any one—man, woman, or child."

"I understand; that's what I should expect of Miss Burton; she knows how to conduct herself."

"Well, I guess she does. No star has been more sought after, and never, in all my experience, have I seen a young woman carry herself with such dignity."

More balm for Hamilton, but he was intent on Marita's address.

"I presume," he said, after a moment's thought, "that they can be reached by telephone. Do you mind calling up the Judge, and asking him if he'll receive me?"

"Really, I couldn't, because—I might as well tell you—they're not in town."

"Thank you," said Hamilton, his face lighting up. "That's all I want to know. If they're not in New York, they will surely be at Lindenhurst."

CHAPTER XXIX

IT was one of those days when buds that have long been ripening burst into bloom; when leaves unfold and grass springs high and feathered nest-builders fill the fragrant air with song.

For the first time since their return to Lindenhurst, the Judge and Marita breakfasted with all the windows open.

"Just look at the apple orchard, father; it has whitened in a single night."

"That's so," said the Judge, proudly surveying the sweep of his land, fresh with the glories of spring. "This place is too lovely to leave. If you weren't so anxious to go away——"

"You'd stay at home and not be half so well off in the autumn as you will be after such a trip as your willful daughter is going to insist upon."

"What a slave I am," said the Judge, looking at Marita fondly, "and how sweet the bondage!"

"Lucky you think so," returned Marita, saucily, "for you have need of your most humble mood this morning."

"What awful thing is the tyrant contemplating now?"

"Nothing less than a morning ride for you—alone."

"Pray, why are you not going with me?"

"Slaves should never be inquisitive; I don't mind telling you, though, that young ladies who are preparing to take their fathers away have various affairs on hand which need attention."

"Really, dear, you're not going to stay in the house this glorious morning?"

"Yes, father, I really am; you see I've been away from home so long that there are lots of things to be done, both for the house and myself."

The Judge shook his head.

"You ought to be out in the air."

"Don't worry about that; I was on the river over an hour before breakfast."

"Well, now," said the Judge, delightedly, "it does me good to hear that; and if you began the day by being so like your old self, I'll do anything you ask."

Marita smiled, and her father never guessed what a heavy heart she had carried on her pilgrimage to the spring in the woodland dell; he couldn't know how continually she lived over the past with Hamilton, how

Lindenhurst was haunted with painful associations; he thought she was becoming quite contented, and she let him think so.

With this thought uppermost in his mind, the Judge ordered his horse, and cantered over the hills while Marita went about the house, occupied with various duties. Concluding that it would be well to change her dainty white morning gown for a more suitable working dress, she left the maid to finish the china closet, and passing through the dining-room, stepped into the hall. The front door stood wide open, and as Marita went towards it on her way upstairs, everything suddenly whirled around. It couldn't be! She had so often seen Hamilton in her imagination that she could not believe she really saw him now, coming up the steps, across the veranda. Oh, it *was* he! This was no fancied figure, vanishing in shadows; it was a moving, breathing man, swiftly advancing, with eyes aglow. A great rush of gladness swept away every restraining thought, and how could she help that joyous step into his arms? Then the world was forgotten in one of those moments only known to the hearts that have loved and suffered.

CHAPTER XXX

WHEN Hamilton bent his head to touch Marita's lips he broke the spell; with a quick move she drew herself away. He caught both her hands, whispering :

" Why not? "

" Don't," she pleaded, seeing he was about to insist, " please don't." Then, looking up into his face, her eyes eloquent with love, Marita said: " If you only knew how hard it is to refuse! "

Hamilton met her look with a gaze that was one long caress; then he pressed his lips to her forehead, saying gently, " Come and talk it over, dear."

Together they passed into the library, each thinking of that dreadful night when she had sent him away.

" I'm sorry you came," Marita began.

" You didn't act sorry to see me," interrupted Hamilton, smiling into the eyes he had hungered for so long.

A wave of red flushed Marita's face as she gave him one of those looks that lovers feed upon.

"I'm sorry you came, though," she repeated. "Our meeting can only bring you suffering, and I think you've had enough."

"So do I," said Hamilton, emphatically, "and I don't propose that either one of us shall have any more; that's why I came home, to straighten everything out."

Hamilton spoke with much more confidence than he really felt.

"If you came back for that," she said slowly, "your trip is useless."

"Marita," said Hamilton, knowing that determined tone only too well, "I cannot believe that you will wrench my heart again as you did the last time we were together in this room. If you knew how I afterwards tried to work, and failed; how I confused cases and mislaid papers until I locked up my desk in despair; how I travelled from place to place in search of peace that never came; how I finally landed in England, learned that you knew the secret I couldn't unfold——"

"How did you learn that I knew?" asked Marita, speaking so low that her words were scarcely audible.

Hamilton's face and voice were full of tenderness.

"I learned it, dear, in this way. You see, I had just returned from a long trip through Egypt, and on the night of my arrival in London I purchased a Paris "Herald"; eagerly seeking for home news, I found an account of Anita Mondello."

"Oh!" cried Marita, feeling as if something struck her when Hamilton spoke that name. He took a step forward, longing to comfort her, but she motioned him back, saying faintly, "Go on, go on."

"I understood; I knew you had learned the truth; I sailed on the first steamer bound for home; I crossed the ocean, Marita, to claim my wife." She impulsively stretched out both hands, and Hamilton seized them in his. "How brave you've been, and so much to bear! 'Twill be easier now, dear heart, with me to help you. Why didn't you send me word that you knew?"

"I—I couldn't," she said, slowly withdrawing her hands from his clasp.

"Too proud," said Hamilton, shaking his head reproachfully; "but now, when I have sought you, when everything is known to both of us, there is nothing to prevent our marriage; nothing to keep you out of my arms; nothing to make you stand there looking like

that. Marita, for God's sake, smile; are you not glad to be my wife?"

"You know I can never be your wife," answered Marita, strength coming with her need.

"I don't know any such thing!" exclaimed Hamilton.

"Do you think I, who have no name, would take one of the proudest names in America? A Hamilton and a nameless woman, aristocracy and illegitimacy."

"Stop!" cried Hamilton, looking dangerous. "You forget that Alexander Hamilton himself is charged with uncertain parentage; you forget the day at Farno's when I said that birth is the one thing for which no man is responsible; you forget the night at Tuxedo, when Chester and I agreed that individual worth is the only true standard in a world of shams; you forget that I've always placed character first."

"I do not forget my own birth."

"No, you don't; it's the first selfish thing I have ever known you to do."

"Selfish?" Marita questioned in surprise.

"Yes, selfish," repeated Hamilton. "Think now, how it is. I know you are worthy in the sight of God, therefore the laws of man do not trouble me. I come

to you and ask you to be my wife; I bring to you all the burning hopes of a man's heart, and you refuse me everything because no priest said a few words to your mother and father."

"Those few words mean law and order, the sanction of the church, the consecration of God."

"Very true; but, Marita, would they have made *you* any different? Would they have changed your soul, given you another heart? If you could only understand how character outweighs the circumstance of birth, then you would stop thinking of your own pride and marry me."

"Don't, oh, don't say any more! All this talk is useless torture."

"It may be torture, but it isn't useless."

Hamilton's eyes blazed with determination; it was well that Marita had plenty of courage.

"It *is* useless," she persisted, pressing her finger nails into her palms. "You wouldn't want to marry me if——"

"What?" demanded Hamilton.

Every atom of color left Marita's face.

"If you remembered my mother's blood; if you knew how it had asserted itself; how it nearly conquered

me in the south. There was a man, Grant, a man down there——"

"I know all that."

"You know—*that?*" Marita gasped, breathless with astonishment.

"Yes, I do, never mind how, but I know it; I know, too, how you repulsed that man and all other men who have sought you during the winter. Don't you see how this knowledge only confirms my belief and strengthens my trust? You have stood many tests."

"Surely you cannot know all; you cannot know how far I went. Grant," she met his questioning gaze steadily, "I allowed that man to take me in his arms and kiss me."

Hamilton never flinched.

"What saved you?" he asked with white lips.

"The thought of you," she cried, glorying in the confession. "I lifted my eyes and saw the stars; I remembered the night when we stood out there by the gate and you told me to look up; the greatness of your love saved me from the littleness of his passion.

Hamilton drew a sharp breath.

"Is there anything more?" he asked, unsteadily.

"No, that is all; I've told you the worst."

"You've told me the best!" he cried joyfully. "The blood that led you astray was inherited; the spirit that conquered it was your own. Do you think any man would fear to trust his future to such a woman?"

Marita's eyes burned in their sockets; her throat was dry; she said huskily, "Knowing all, you still——"

"Yes," he whispered, opening his arms.

"Oh," she cried, with glorious self-abandon, "take me; I'm yours, body and soul, your wife, forever."

A rapturous move, and their lips met as if never to part.

Half an hour later, when the Judge rode up the driveway, he saw Marita and Hamilton standing on the veranda waiting for him. The first glance told him that everything was settled; he could read their happiness in the very way they stood side by side. Quickening his pace he soon reached the house, and springing to the ground the Judge went up the sunlit steps, holding out a hand to each, his heart filled with thanksgiving.

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